THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM

HEREWARD CARRINGTON

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THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM

THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM

FRAUDULENT AND GENUINE

BEING A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE MOST IMPORTANT HISTORICAL PHENOMENA; A CRITICISM OF THEIR EVIDENTIAL VALUE, AND A COMPLETE EXPOSITION OF THE METHODS EMPLOYED IN FRAUDULENTLY REPRODUCING THE SAME.

BY

HEREWARD CARRINGTON. PH.D.

Author of "Modern Psychical Phenomena," "Psychical Phenomena and the War," "The Coming Science," etc.

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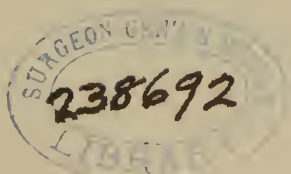

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Third Edition

PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

THIS book—which was first published in 1907, and which has been out of print for several years—is now re-issued, since I have felt that—owing to the widespread interest in psychical research at the present time, and the great number of persons who are visiting mediums, clairvoyants, astrologers, palmists, numerologists, etc.,—it is high time that the warnings and advice contained in this book should again be placed before the public—by way of cautioning them against the too-ready acceptance of many of the "phenomena" which are produced at public séances, and offered in the name of "spiritualism."

The majority of sitters who attend séances are entirely unfitted either to judge the value of the evidence presented or to distinguish fraudulent from genuine phenomena—and this is in no sense an insult to their intelligence. It is utterly *impossible,* as a rule, for the sitter—no matter how sceptical he may be—to detect many of these tricks, without a knowledge of the *actual methods employed*; for they are practically undetectable. Only a wide general knowledge of legerdemain and the psychology of deception will render this possible. The methods of trickery are so numerous and so clever, the daring and the ingenuity of the pseudo-medium are so remarkable, that it is small wonder that the average sitter fails to detect the *modus operandi*; and hence comes away convinced that he has, in truth, seen genuine "phenomena," whereas he has seen but clever tricks and blatant fraud. The actual *methods* which are resorted to, by fraudulent mediums, in order to produce these seeming "miracles," are herein explained in full.

The reader must not draw the conclusion, from all this, that the author is a confirmed sceptic, or a complete disbeliever in genuine phenomena. On the contrary, I am fully convinced that genuine physical phenomena—even materializations—occur in a genuine manner. I myself have seen such phenomena, beheld such materializations—but such phenomena are *rare*; and today I believe as fully as when I wrote this book that "ninety-eight percent of the physical phenomena are fraudulently produced," and on re-reading the book I find scarcely a sentence which I should wish to alter, or even modify, were I to write it today.

This I say in spite of the fact that, since this book was first issued, I have seen Eusapia Palladino, and witnessed what I believe to be many genuine and remarkable physical manifestations. In spite of that fact, I am as fully persuaded as ever that, if the reader insists upon running about, from one professional "physical medium" to another, he will encounter, in practically every case, precisely the sort of fraud herein described; and it is in the hope of warning him against this that the present volume is re-issued.

Two passages in the present book I should, however, wish to modify, in view of later developments. The first is that on pp. 11-14, relating to Eusapia Palladino. I now believe that the extremely sceptical tone adopted regarding this medium was unfounded. Nevertheless, in view of her undoubted fraud—especially in America—and my final words—"If Eusapia possesses genuine mediumistic gifts, it ought only to be a matter of time and sufficiently careful experimenting in order to establish that fact"—I am glad to leave the passage as it stands—illustrating as it does, my former sceptical but (I hope) open-minded attitude toward this case—which later personal investigations have led me to believe largely genuine.

The second reservation relates to the so-called "Blue Book," mentioned on pp. 314-16. Subsequent investigations conducted both by Dr. Hyslop and by myself have led me to believe that the evidence for the existence of such a "Blue Book" is extremely doubtful—though something of the sort unquestionably existed. The last word upon this subject has not, however, as yet been said!

I offer this new edition of my book to the public with the hope, and in the firm conviction, that "by clearing away many of the obstructions that exist—in the shape of fraudulent phenomena—this book may help to lay the foundations of such a science"—as Psychical Research.

H. C.

PREFACE

One or two words of a prefatory nature are necessitated by the publication of a book such as this. Many persons will doubtless consider it an unnecessary attack upon spiritualism and the spiritistic creed, but I beg to assure my readers that such is by no means the case. It is *because* I believe that such phenomena do occasionally occur, that I am anxious to expose the fraud connected with the subject, — since it is only by so doing that we can ever hope to reach the genuine phenomena which are to be studied. " Caution " is the most important factor in the investigation of all psychic and spiritualistic phenomena, and a knowledge of the fraudulent methods employed by mediums is of prime importance to the investigator of these problems.

The investigations of the Society for Psychical Research (hereinafter referred to, in this book, as the S. P. R.) have demonstrated the fact that supernormal phenomena *do* occur; but whether the " physical phenomena " are to be considered as such is a question that remains still undecided. Certain it is that much fraud exists in the production of spurious " marvels " of the kind, and the chief object of this book is to expose in full the *methods* that are employed in fraudulently reproducing the genuine phenomena — if genuine phenomena there be.

I have quoted extensively throughout from books on sleight-of-hand, — since works of this character are not read as a rule by the public — even the interested public; and especially from a work entitled *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, which contains much valuable information, but which is now practically unobtainable, owing to the fact that a certain number of spiritualists (with a genuine love

for truth!) bought up and destroyed all the copies of this book — together with the plates — so that, unless one should be fortunate enough to possess a copy, it is unlikely that the book will ever make its way into the investigator's hands, and hence the contents be lost to the reading public forever. I make this my excuse for quoting from the book at greater length than is customary in such cases.

One word as to the arrangement of this book. Because it is divided so sharply into two sections — "The Fraudulent" and "The Genuine" — I do not thereby intend to assert dogmatically that *all* the phenomena mentioned in the first part are fraudulent, nor that *all* the cases quoted in the second part are genuine. My reason for dividing the book in this manner is to make (so far as the evidence seems to warrant) a tentative division of the phenomena into two classes — without thereby committing myself to belief, for or against, in either case — which question must be settled by the actual facts, in any event. The division is merely *tentative*, and made with the object of simplifying and clarifying the problem, which is, at best, highly complex.

I wish to hereby acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor James H. Hyslop, to Miss Louise W. Kops, and to my friend, Mr. Herbert B. Turner, for much valuable assistance in the preparation of this work.

H. C.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	vii
	GLOSSARY	xiii
	PART I—THE FRAUDULENT	
I.	THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM	3
II.	THE SLADE-ZÖLLNER INVESTIGATION	19
III.	THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DECEPTION	48
IV.	TABLE-TURNING AND TABLE-LIFTING	64
V.	RAPS	77
VI.	SLATE-WRITING TESTS	84
	§ 1. METHODS WITH A SINGLE SLATE (Prepared)	91
	§ 2. METHODS WITH A SINGLE SLATE (Unprepared)	102
	§ 3. METHODS WITH A DOUBLE SLATE (Prepared)	118
	§ 4. METHODS WITH A DOUBLE SLATE (Unprepared)	127
	§ 5. MISCELLANEOUS TESTS	138
VII.	ROPE-TYING TESTS	143
VIII.	"SPIRIT" POSTS, SACKS, HANDCUFFS, ETC.	168
IX.	HOLDING TESTS	186
X.	MISCELLANEOUS PHYSICAL TESTS	196
XI.	SPIRIT-PHOTOGRAPHY	206
XII.	THE PARAFFINE MOULD TEST	224
XIII.	MATERIALIZATION	230
XIV.	MATERIALIZATION (*continued*)	255
XV.	SEALED-LETTER READING	276
XVI.	MIND-READING PERFORMANCES	291
XVII.	TRANCE, "TEST SEANCES," ETC.	312
	PART II—THE GENUINE	
XVIII.	GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	321
XIX.	RAPS	340
XX.	TELEKINESIS	358
XXI.	THE MEDIUMSHIP OF D. D. HOME:	
	§ 1. MISCELLANEOUS PHENOMENA	372
	§ 2. THE LEVITATION	377

CHAPTER		PAGE
	§ 3. Elongation	394
	§ 4. The "Fire Tests"	399
XXII.	Trance — The Case of Mrs. Piper	410
XXIII.	Summary and Conclusion	415
	Index	419

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	To face page
Obtaining Knots in Endless Cords	44
Obtaining Knots in Endless Cords (*another method*)	46
Trick-slates and Slate Manipulation	104
Rope-ties, Sacks, and Handcuffs	164
Releasing Hand from the Finger-hold	188
Releasing Hand from the Wrist-hold	190
Dr. Hodgson's Experimental Photograph	212
Imitation Spirit-photograph	214
Spirit-photo — Showing Marks of Manipulation	216
Alleged Spirit-photo — Containing Various Items of Interest	218
Trick-envelopes and Sealed-letter Tests	284

GLOSSARY

AUTOMATISM. Self-moved, automatic. An "automatism" generally signifies a movement made without conscious thought and will on the part of the person by whom such movement is made.

CLAIRVOYANCE. Literally "Clear Seeing." It signifies the supposed power, possessed by some persons, of viewing distant scenes as though present in the body; or of beholding objects invisible to the normal eyesight.

CRYSTAL-GAZING. The act of looking into a crystal glass ball, or other *speculum*, or reflecting surface, with the object of inducing hallucinatory pictures. The person doing so is called a *seer* or *scryer*. The pictures, of course, exist in the mind and not in the crystal.

LEVITATION. A raising of objects from the ground by supposed supernormal means.

PREMONITION. A supernormal indication of any kind of event still in the future.

PARAKINESIS. The production of physical movements where the contact observed is insufficient to account for them.

POLTERGEIST. Literally, "Noisy Spirit." A house is said to be haunted by a poltergeist when bells are rung, furniture upset, crockery broken, etc., by no apparent, normal means.

RETROCOGNITION. Knowledge of the past, supernormally acquired.

SUBLIMINAL. Of thoughts, feelings, etc., lying beneath the ordinary threshold (limen) of consciousness, — as opposed to *supraliminal*, lying above the threshold.

SUPERNORMAL. Beyond the level of ordinary experience, — supplanting the word "supernatural," which is held to be meaningless.

TELEKINESIS. The alleged supernormal movements of objects, not due to any known force.

TELEPATHY. The communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognized channels of sense.

TELÆSTHESIA. Perception at a distance. Practically the same as clairvoyance.

TELURGY. A name for a hypothetical force or mode of action, concerned with the conveyance of telepathic impressions, and perhaps with other supernormal operation.

PART I

THE FRAUDULENT

THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM

CHAPTER I

THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM

At the outset of our discussion, it is necessary that the terms used should be distinctly understood by the reader, and I must begin by calling attention to the difference between "spiritualism" and "spiritism," — which terms are made convertible in the minds of most persons. The word "spiritualism" is really a philosophic term, meaning the opposite of materialism, and hence, strictly speaking, every one who is not a materialist is a spiritualist — but not necessarily a spiritist. The term "spiritism" means the communication of the living with the spirits of the departed — usually through an intermediary termed a "medium." Thus, a spiritist means one who believes that it is not only possible, but that it is an actual fact, that we can get into communication with the spirits of the departed at séances, and at various other times, spontaneously. As a matter of fact, however, these distinctions are not preserved in the public mind, and the word "spiritualism" is used as synonymous with "spiritism." Hence, it is in this popular meaning of the term that the word is used throughout this book — the expression, "Modern Spiritualism" having become too deeply rooted in the language to be easily changed. It is accordingly treated, throughout this book, as implying spiritism, when

the term "spiritualism" is used, — unless it is otherwise stated.

Spiritualism, in the pure sense, has, of course, existed from the very earliest times. A most interesting résumé of the beliefs of various ancient nations on this subject will be found in Elbé's *Future Life in the Light of Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science.*[1] "Modern Spiritualism," on the other hand, did not come into existence until 1847, when the "Rochester Knockings" startled the world, and founded a new era in the world's religious thought. The antecedents of spiritualism were, as Podmore clearly shows,[2] the so-called "poltergeist" cases, on the one hand, and the early mesmerists, with their "clairvoyant" and "ecstatic" cases, on the other. These "poltergeist" cases I have briefly referred to on pp. 361-3; while a full account and discussion of the mesmeric side of the question will be found in Podmore's book, above referred to, Moll's *Hypnotism,* Braid's *Hypnotism,* and many other works of a kindred nature, in which the historic side of that question is thoroughly discussed.

It will now be seen that, if the definition of spiritualism given above is the true one (and I think it may be considered so — one of the representative spiritualists writing: "By spiritism is meant a connection, or intercourse with the spiritual world"[3]), *the theory and the philosophy of the belief have nothing whatever to do with physical phenomena* — which, theoretically, belong to a different category altogether. Physical phenomena take place in, and belong to, the material world, and have nothing to do with communication with a spirit-world. Many persons, seeing unaccountable physical phenomena happening in their presence, are apt to attribute these movements or phenomena to the action of spirits — especially if *intelligence* is connected with the phenomena. They may or they may not be so caused, but the point to bear in mind is that, whether the explanation

[1] *V.* also Howitt, *History of the Supernatural;* Ennermoser, *History of Magic;* Thompson, *Proofs of Life after Death,* etc.
[2] *Modern Spiritualism.* 2 vols.
[3] *Spiritism,* by Edelweiss, p. 54.

of these phenomena be spiritistic or physical, or whether they are ultimately shown to be nothing more than the results of fraud, that would not in the least influence the evidence for the existence of the spirit-world, — which evidence is obtained from mental and other tests, and hence their disproof would in no wise influence the central problem of spiritualism, — which is, as stated, the possibility of communication with the spirit-world, under certain circumstances and conditions. It is important that these facts should be kept carefully in mind, since it is necessary to impress upon the popular consciousness the fact that, even should the *whole* of the physical phenomena of spiritualism turn out to be nothing but fraudulent, it would in no wise influence the *real problem* at issue; the "real problem" yet remains, being altogether independent of the evidence afforded by the physical phenomena.

It is evident, therefore, that I cannot discuss at any length the "real problems" connected with spiritualism — the scientific proof of life after death — in a volume such as this. I have briefly discussed this evidence on pp. 410-14, and there referred to those passages in other books and publications where the evidence will be found very fully discussed. The object of the present volume is, of course, to consider those physical phenomena which — rightly or wrongly — have been attributed to spirit agency by thousands of persons who have witnessed them: to consider their character, the historical evidence in their favor, as well as that which tends to show that all these phenomena are the results of fraud, and are seldom or never genuine in character; and, finally, to show the actual *methods that are employed* by fraudulent mediums in producing the phenomena by that means. I hope that, by describing the actual methods in considerable detail, I shall, in some degree, fill a gap in the history of the subject, which has too long stood empty. My book differs from that of Mr. Podmore in that he showed, in that work, how certain phenomena *might* have been produced, on certain historical occasions; while I have confined myself, almost entirely, to showing how these phenomena actually *are* done on a great *number* of

occasions — from which the reader may, if he choose, draw his own conclusions about the possibility of the historic phenomena having been done in the manner described, or in some very similar manner. I have undertaken to criticize, in some detail, one or two of the most famous historical cases (pp. 19-47), but have confined myself entirely to the description of the fraudulent *methods* employed, a task for which I am, perhaps, because of long training in these lines, entitled to discuss most fully. In the present volume, therefore, the prime object has been, throughout, to give a clear and a detailed description of the methods employed by fraudulent mediums; and it is hoped that this part of the work will be of assistance to the investigator by placing him on his guard against the various methods by which the medium usually tricks his unwary sitters.

Turning, now, for the moment, to the historical side of this question, we find that there is scarcely a medium producing physical phenomena who has not, at one time or another, been exposed in the grossest kind of fraud, and that the whole history of the subject — so far as the physical phenomena are concerned — is bespattered with evidences of fraud, and the worst "moral mud" and intellectual mire imaginable! It presents an almost unbroken chain of evidence, showing that fraud and nothing but fraud has been practised throughout, by mediums; and presenting scarcely any evidence whatever that they are ever genuine, or did really happen, as stated. Mr. Podmore's book, so often quoted, may be referred to, in proof of these assertions. We find that, in practically all cases that have been recorded, fraud has afterward been proved to exist; or the nature of the evidence is such as to strongly suggest that fraud was employed, — only undetected. Let us glance, very briefly, at a few of the historical cases, by way of illustrating the statements here made.

To go back to the historic cases of "clairvoyance," it is certain that the evidence is, in almost all of these cases, most defective, and that the experiments were conducted under conditions which the average psychical researcher of to-day would

deem anything but "good conditions" — the natural ignorance of the laws of conscious and unconscious *suggestion* frequently discrediting the cases — as affording any evidence for the supernormal. "Burdin, a member of the Academy (of Medicine) offered a prize of three thousand francs to any one who could read without the use of the eyes. The offer was open for two years and subsequently the time was extended. Considering the large number who had claimed this power, few offered themselves for examination; and these either clearly failed to meet the test (being detected in the manipulation of the bandage, and the like), or those who had the somnambulists in charge refused to conform to the conditions required by the examiners; and so the prize was never awarded." [1]

Doctor Hodgson, a man who has done more than any other in the detection and exposure of fraudulent mediums, conclusively proved that it is almost an impossibility to blindfold a shrewd person so that he cannot see a *little* from under the bandage.[2] As this very limited amount of vision was all that was required, in the vast majority of cases, it is certain that the evidence for these cases is slight indeed, the testimony of the Seybert Commission going far to prove the statements here made.[3]

Those mediums who undertook to read sealed letters, etc., have all been detected in fraud at one time or another; while the great number of methods that could be employed, in order to deceive the sitter, would render it next to impossible for him to detect the method employed, — unless well informed of the possibilities of fraud in this particular field. The medium who gained the greatest reputation in this line was Charles H. Foster, a full account of whose life and doings will be found in a book entitled *The Salem Seer*, by George C. Bartlett. Though the author of this book is evidently a firm believer in the powers of Mr. Foster, it may be said that the cases he narrates are very easy to explain

[1] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 205.
[2] *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. I., pp. 84-6.
[3] *Report*, pp. 128-47.

as the result of trickery with one or two exceptions. The accounts of séances held with Foster, printed in Owen's *Debatable Land*, pp. 386-390, 443-7, are again anything but convincing, and clearly show that, although Mr. Owen was doubtless a clever man and a fine collector of evidence for the supernormal, he was anything but a good *observer*.

That Foster was an impostor there can be no doubt. A careful perusal of many of the reports of séances strongly suggests this, in the first place; and when we read the accounts of the séances held with him by John W. Truesdell there can remain no doubt in the average person's mind that Foster was nothing more than a clever trickster. Mr. Truesdell was, in fact, enabled to see the actual method that Foster employed, in reading his sitter's ballot, under his very nose, and thus interestingly describes the process in his *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, pp. 137-8:

"I had noticed at each interview that Mr. Foster, who is an inveterate smoker, had a great deal of trouble to keep his cigar alight. Half a dozen times, during each sitting, he would strike a match, and, holding it in a peculiar manner, as if he was in the open air, where a strong wind was blowing, would take a whiff or two, and then allow the cigar to go out again. After carefully comparing notes with several reliable persons, who had held séances with the same medium, I came to the conclusion, deducted from their experience as well as my own, that Mr. Foster invariably changed the ballots, and that, while the duplicate blanks lay upon the table before his victims, and he was engaged in the troublesome task of relighting his cigar, he was, at the same time, reading, by the aid of the very match so carelessly employed, an open ballot held in the palm of his right hand!"

Mr. Truesdell then goes on to describe how, suspecting the manner that Foster accomplished this test, he, at the next sitting, suddenly seized the five ballots lying on the table before him, and found every one of them to be a *blank* — though they were, of course, supposed to be the ones containing the questions his sitter had written on the pellets.

That the ballots had been substituted was, therefore, clear. Apparently, Foster then broke down and confessed the whole trick,[1] as Slade did at a later date (p. 23).

I have referred thus at length to the case of Foster because I do not remember having read an exposé of this medium's operations, outside of Truesdell's book — which is now out of print and scarce. Moreover, the "ballot test" is one very frequently employed by mediums to-day, and it is as well to point out the fact that the medium who gained the reputation of being the greatest medium in the world, in this particular line, was a fraud! Various other methods of reading ballots, sealed letters, etc., will be found on pp. 276-90.

There can be no doubt, then, that the history of spiritualism is saturated with fraud, and that the vast majority of the phenomena obtained through mediums are fraudulent in character. A very fine résumé of the credulity on the one hand, and knavish trickery on the other (so common a few years ago), will be found in Mr. F. W. H. Myers's paper on "Resolute Credulity," in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XI., pp. 213-34. There is also a very interesting article on "Spurious Mediumship" in *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. III., pp. 199-207. The net result of the investigations conducted by the Society for Psychical Research was to produce the conviction that no results obtained through *professional* mediums were to be trusted, so long as the conditions rendered fraud *possible;* and, further, that practically all *professional* mediums are frauds! "There does not exist, and there never has existed, a professional medium of any note who has not been convicted of trickery or fraud," says J. N. Maskelyne.[2] And, in case Mr. Maskelyne may be considered a prejudiced witness in such matters, it may be stated that the American S. P. R. was unable to find any medium who could produce satisfactory phenomena under test conditions, and stated that "it is, in their opinion, inadvisable to undertake further investigation in regard to professional paid materializing mediums, inasmuch as all the materializing séances yet at-

[1] *Bottom Facts*, pp. 140-1. [2] *The Supernatural?* p. 183.

tended by them have been held under conditions which rendered any scientific investigation impossible." [1] A very fine letter on "Professional Mediumship" — which is of much interest from the psychological point of view — will be found in the *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. III., pp. 120-8. But the most convincing testimony, in this direction, is that supplied by the author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, — who, after all the actual contact he must have had with mediums, *as one of them*, can write: "Of all the mediums he (the author) has met, in eighteen years, and that means a great many, in all phases, he has never met *one* that was not sailing the very same description of craft as himself. Every one; no exception" (p. 95). And on p. 322 occurs the following sentence:

". . . His own career and the fact that he has met no other professional medium, male or female, in his long experience and extensive travels, who were not 'crooked,' leads him to the conclusion that, from the professional, you are to expect nothing genuine."

Whether these statements are accepted as true or not, certain it is that the history of the physical phenomena of spiritualism bears them out to a remarkable degree. Especially is this obvious whenever the mediums came into contact with members of the S. P. R.; when more exact conditions and careful "tests" were insisted upon. It may almost be said that the S. P. R. has never succeeded in obtaining evidence for a single genuine physical phenomenon in its whole career, while the number of fraudulent mediums it has unearthed is amazing! They have been no more successful in their day than the Seybert Commission was in its — and it is certainly a suspicious fact that, so soon as strict and reliable "tests" are insisted upon, and no opportunity given the medium to produce the phenomena by fraudulent means, the phenomena altogether cease! The inadequacy of the tests upon which the average spiritualist was wont to rely has now clearly been proved; and, if no phenomena are ever forthcoming, under conditions that would preclude the possibility

[1] *Amer. Proceedings S. P. R.*, p. 230.

of fraud, the physical phenomena of spiritualism must always rest under the cloud of the blackest suspicion.

The newer evidence, indeed, is precisely on a par with the old, the same uncertainty being present. Let us take, for example, the case of Eusapia Paladino.

I cannot now stop to consider at length the history of the Paladino case — interesting as that case is, in more than one respect: a very brief résumé must here suffice. (For a detailed account of this medium's career, *v.* Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 198-203, etc.) This medium, Eusapia Paladino, has been investigated almost entirely by European *savants*, — no Americans nor Englishmen having had an opportunity to observe the phenomena occurring in her presence, except in the "Cambridge Sittings," to be mentioned presently. Outside of the S. P. R. investigations, this medium's career has been one of almost uninterrupted triumph. She succeeded in convincing the Continental *savants* who investigated her powers, that genuine phenomena were produced in her presence, and I think I am right in asserting that the majority of them still continue to think so — despite the supposed exposure at Cambridge. The majority of the reports are to be found in the *Annales des Sciences Psychiques;* a review of M. Richet's "Notes," "Experiences de Milan," and the "Milan Commission" will be found in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., pp. 218-25. The phenomena occurring in this medium's presence were most striking — mostly telekinetic phenomena of a remarkable type, apparently — and baffled all those who witnessed them; nor could they, in any way, account for them by fraud. So important did the S. P. R. and the Continental scientists consider this case, indeed, that M. Richet invited Professor Oliver J. Lodge, Mr. Myers, and Professor J. Ochorowicz (the author of a very remarkable work on *Mental Suggestion*, among others) to visit him at his own house, on the Ile Roubaud, a small island in the Mediterranean. On this lonely island, a new series of experiments was conducted, the net result of which was to convince all those present of the reality of the phenomena. A full *Report*

of these sittings was afterward printed in the *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., pp. 306-60; and very extraordinary they appear. Doctor Hodgson, however, "returned to the charge," and, in a very remarkable paper, published in the *Journal*, Vol. VII., pp. 36-55, he pointed out what he considered many defects in the evidence, and asserted that the whole of the phenomena were probably due to fraud and fraud alone. His criticism of the *Reports* is detailed and, as stated, very remarkable. It brought forth replies from the four investigators whose *Reports* were criticized — Messrs. Myers, Lodge, Richet, and Ochorowicz all replying in detail to Doctor Hodgson's criticisms (pp. 55-79). The replies did not convince Doctor Hodgson, however, who still contended that fraud was practised, and that the *Reports* published were not convincing. A discussion ensued, the outcome of which was that Doctor Hodgson went to England, and there took part in the famous "Cambridge Sittings." In these, Doctor Hodgson succeeded in discovering the manner in which the medium was in the habit of releasing one of her hands; and showed that — so far as that series of sittings went, at any rate — fraud and trickery were practised, and was thus enabled to account for all the phenomena then witnessed. "Mr. and Mrs. Myers, Miss Johnson, Mrs. Sidgwick, and myself (Professor Sidgwick), as well as Doctor Hodgson, unanimously adopted the conclusion that nothing but trickery had been at work in the Cambridge series of experiments." [1]

The S. P. R. consequently decided to "drop" Eusapia, and to have nothing more to do with her. She had been detected in trickery, and, according to the standards of the Society, that was enough to condemn her from future publicity, so far as they were concerned. In one sense, this is a very wise course to pursue, since the eyes of the scientific world are centred on the S. P. R., and it is impossible for them to make any exception to their high standards of evidence, without damaging their reputation, as a scientific society. On the other hand, this course was a very unfor-

[1] *Journal*, Vol. VII., p. 159.

tunate one, since the Continental investigators, convinced that the medium did not *always* practise fraud of the kind discovered by Doctor Hodgson, continued their researches, and (apparently) showed that phenomena were produced when trickery was not possible — at least trickery of the sort Doctor Hodgson detected. So strong was this new evidence, indeed, that Mr. Myers and Professor Lodge retracted their former beliefs, and became more than ever convinced that supernormal phenomena *did* occasionally happen in Eusapia's presence, while perfectly willing to admit that fraud had been practised at Cambridge, and would account for all the phenomena there witnessed.[1] The Continental observers were also convinced anew that supernormal phenomena occurred in Eusapia's presence.

A lengthy criticism of the Hodgson (Cambridge) sittings is to be found in Doctor Maxwell's *Metapsychical Phenomena*, in which he states that Doctor Hodgson discovered nothing that was not already known to the Continental *savants;* but that his " explanation " had been found by them inadequate to cover *all* the facts. He criticizes the position of the S. P. R. with some bitterness, and ends by asserting that, " My testimony contradicts formally and explicitly the conclusions of the Cambridge investigators. Eusapia does not always defraud; with us, she rarely defrauded " (p. 417). When this book was reviewed for the *Proceedings*, Miss Johnson added an editorial " Note," replying to some of Doctor Maxwell's criticisms, and pointed out that it was only after the medium has refused to submit to any of the conditions proposed, that they adopted the course they did (of allowing her " free play," so to speak, and catching her in the act of producing the phenomena fraudulently, — rather than controlling her so that their production was impossible), and this course was pursued because of the fraud they felt was being practised.[2]

And thus the matter stands — one-half of the world convinced that Eusapia is a fraud, and the other half convinced that the phenomena witnessed in her presence are genuine!

[1] *Journal*, Vol. IX., p. 35. [2] *Proceedings*, Vol. XVIII., p. 501.

What the ultimate verdict will be it is hard to foresee, but it is certain that the case, as it stands, is not convincing to the scientific world, and fresh evidence must be forthcoming if the case is ever to be decided in her favor. If Eusapia possesses genuine mediumistic gifts, it ought only to be a matter of time and sufficiently careful experimenting in order to establish that fact.

It is unnecessary for me to consider the evidence for the supernormal in the case of William Stainton Moses, — for the reason that this survey work has already been done with admirable care and discretion by Mr. Myers and Mr. Podmore, the one arguing for the genuineness of the phenomena, the other against their reality — or at least against any interpretation of them which would render it necessary to suppose any supernormal powers at work.[1]

Briefly, the case is this: A minister, a teacher in one of London's largest public schools, a gentleman of refinement in every way, suddenly finds himself gifted with remarkable qualities which he discovers are mediumistic in character, — though he has never taken any interest in the subject heretofore — except, indeed, to be rather annoyed and bored by it! The phenomena occurring in his presence were, *inter alia*, telekinesis, "apports," levitation, musical sounds, lights, — in fact, practically the whole range of mediumistic phenomena. If these phenomena were genuine, his is undoubtedly the most remarkable case on record. Unfortunately, it can now never be settled whether they were genuine or not, for the reason that Mr. Moses shrank from all publicity in the matter, allowing none to attend his séances but a few personal friends, and refusing to submit to any "test conditions," such as were imposed on public mediums. Certainly Mr. Moses did not produce the phenomena in the usual

[1] See *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., pp. 245-354, and Vol. XI., pp. 24-114; *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 116-33; Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 280-8; *Journal S. P. R., passim; Spirit Teachings; Spirit Identity;* Lilley's *Modern Mystics and Modern Magic; Human Personality*, Vol. II., pp. 223-37, 540-1, 546-9, 551-4, 583-7, etc. The case will be found discussed at great length in the above mentioned works.

fraudulent manner — his social position, both public and private, forbids our considering such a thing for a moment. His object was certainly not notoriety, for the full accounts of his séances were never published during his lifetime, but were edited and published by Mr. Myers after his death. If he had sought notoriety, he certainly would have publicly proclaimed his mediumship, and published an account of his séances *during* his life; and that is the only conceivable reason for producing the phenomena by fraud — if they were so produced. Mr. Moses' private character had always been irreproachable and he was beloved by all who knew him. There is, of course, the possibility that the sitters, and the medium, too, were hallucinated at some of these séances; but then again the nature of the evidence prevents us from accepting this as the true explanation of phenomena that occurred. The case is a most baffling one, and deserves the reader's careful perusal. As Andrew Lang said, the choice of beliefs is between "the moral and the physical miracle," and, like him, "I can accept neither" — I am content to have no explanation at all. I cannot conceive that the phenomena were fraudulently produced by Mr. Moses; and, on the other hand, I cannot conceive that the phenomena were genuine! The value of the evidence in the case must be estimated by each individual for himself; it *proves nothing* to those who do not know Mr. Moses, *or* the phenomena, for the simple reason that no "test conditions" were ever allowed to be imposed upon the medium. There the matter stands.

I wish to add a few words to clear away, if possible, the great misunderstandings that exist in the public mind as to the relations of the S. P. R. and the Theosophical Society. It must be understood that, although the present relations of the two societies are anything but pleasant and friendly, they were not always so by any means — quite the contrary. Colonel Olcott clearly shows in his *Old Diary Leaves* that Mme. Blavatsky was at one time a sincere spiritualist (or at least sincerely interested in the subject), and was in

close touch with the S. P. R. during its early progress. Mr. Sinnett, Doctor Hartmann, and others were, in fact, members of the Society, and in hearty sympathy with its general aims and methods. The first *Report* issued by the Society was, if anything, most favorable in its tone, — rather assuming the genuineness of the phenomena recorded — pointing out the close relation and correspondence of these phenomena with apparitions and other kindred phenomena which the Society was investigating; and, while the *Report* was entirely unbiassed one way or the other, it inclined to the attitude of belief rather than to that of skepticism. This *Report* was privately printed for circulation among members of the Society, however, and is now quite out of print and unobtainable. The point I wish to make clear is that the initial attitude of the Society toward the recorded phenomena was that of scrupulous fairness and impartiality.

Their sincerity should be apparent from the very fact of their sending Doctor Hodgson to India to investigate the phenomena at first hand, for it is hardly likely that they would have done so if they had thought the phenomena anything but of the very greatest importance. Doctor Hodgson spent three months in India, investigating these reported phenomena with the greatest care, at first hand, and it was his entirely unfavorable and smashing *Report* that made the S. P. R. change its attitude toward the phenomena, and proclaim its belief that they were nothing but cleverly devised tricks, the supposed phenomena being produced by trickery from start to finish. The detailed *Report* may be read in full in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. III., pp. 201-400. I would refer my readers to that *Report* for all particulars. Naturally, this caused a great stir in the ranks of the Theosophists. Mr. Sinnett resigned from the S. P. R., and wrote a pamphlet, *The Occult World Phenomena and the Society for Psychical Research*, in which he attacked the *Report* fiercely, and was backed up by Mrs. Annie Besant, and other Theosophists of less note. This called forth a reply from Doctor Hodgson, in which he reviewed these criticisms, and, to the mind of most persons (not Theosophists), literally tore them

to pieces. His paper, "The Defence of the Theosophists," will be found in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., pp. 129-59. This article was never answered satisfactorily by any Theosophist, and there the S. P. R. let the matter drop, feeling that any further evidence of fraud was unnecessary, and refused to occupy itself any longer with phenomena that had long ago been shown to be fraudulent.

I say the Society let the matter rest there. Other individuals, however, continued to publish damning evidence, which completed the story, so far as the *phenomena* were concerned. This evidence will be found in *The Religio-Philosophical Journal* (Aug. 10 - Sept. 7, 1889); *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, by V. S. Solovyoff; *Isis Very Much Unveiled*, by Edmund Garrett, and other publications. These conclusively prove to any sane mind, it seems to me, that the phenomena obtained in Mme. Blavatsky's presence, in India, were fraud and nothing but fraud.[1]

Now, the point I wish to impress particularly upon my reader is this: That the S. P. R. has no quarrel whatever with the Theosophical Society, except in regard to the *phenomena*. The "philosophy of Theosophy," so to speak, may be true or false — that is of no interest to the Society, and it has never concerned itself with it. The attack of the S. P. R. was levelled entirely against the *phenomena* observed, and not at all against the philosophical system that Theosophy taught; and that is the fact which the public has never, apparently, grasped. The phenomena and the philosophy must be kept strictly separate, and the man-in-the-street may accept every word of the Society's *Report* as truth, and yet continue to believe in the philosophy. To be sure, it would be very illogical for him to do so, since the philosophy is,

[1] I suggested what seemed to me a possible explanation of some of the "Mahatma Miracles" in a magazine devoted to the interests of the conjuring fraternity, entitled *Mahatma* (Vol. III., No. 3), part of my criticism being quoted in an article in *The Cosmopolitan Magazine* for December, 1899. I had not at that time read Doctor Hodgson's *Report* in the *Proceedings;* when I had done so I saw that my (hypnotic) explanation was not needed — simple trickery accounting for the whole of the observed phenomena. I now beg to withdraw, consequently, the explanation I there put forward, and to state that I no longer consider it the correct one.

in a sense, inseparably bound up with the phenomena, and dependent upon them; but, nevertheless, he would be quite at liberty to believe it if he saw fit. The position of the average person, who has carefully studied the evidence in the case, will probably be well summed up in the following quotation from Doctor Hodgson's paper, in *Proceedings*, Vol. IX., above referred to, which deserves wider publicity. It is:

"In a final word I must remind my readers that I have been dealing in this paper, as I have dealt throughout, with the phenomena alleged by Madame Blavatsky in support of the tenets which she preached, and not with those tenets themselves. Of those streams of superhuman knowledge I will only say that I prefer to tap them at least one stage nearer their fountain-heads. I lay claim to no vast erudition. But the sources which were good enough for Mme. Blavatsky are good enough for me; and so long as Bohn's Classical Library and Trübner's Oriental Library are within reach of a modest purse, I shall prefer to draw on these useful repertoires for my ideas of Platonic and Buddhistic thought, — even though I should thus be obliged to receive those ideas in a bald, old-fashioned shape, unspiced with fraudulent marvels, and uncorroborated by the forged correspondence of fictitious Teachers of Truth."

CHAPTER II

THE SLADE - ZÖLLNER INVESTIGATION

The whole history of modern spiritualism presents three, and only three, cases of remarkable physical manifestations such as cannot, very readily, be accounted for by fraud, by one or the other of the devices and methods described in this book. These three cases present many remarkable phenomena, and it is necessary that they should be considered in a work of this character at some length. I refer to the accounts of phenomena published by Doctor Hare, Professor Zöllner, and Sir William Crookes. Sir William Crookes's experiments will be found noticed at some length on pp. 372-409. The experiments of Doctor Hare I must also pass over with a mere mention, and this for two reasons: first, because of lack of space to consider them in the detail that would be necessary; and, second, because they are not really worth this detailed examination. I agree with Doctor Hyslop in his opinion that "Hare's experiments . . . were not so good as Zöllner's," [1] and with Mr. Podmore when he wrote, "Doctor Hare does not seem to have realized the possibility of fraud . . . and the character of his book generally, consisting as it does largely of dissertations on theology and cosmology, founded on spirit revelations, is not such as to inspire confidence in his judgment." [2] While, therefore, I do not deny the value of the evidence collected and presented by Professor Hare, it will be more profitable for us to examine the more scientific and terse accounts of the phenomena wit-

[1] *Borderland of Psychical Research*, p. 237.
[2] *Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 49.

nessed by Professor Zöllner. This I shall accordingly proceed to do in some detail — since it is necessary that the chief historic phenomena should receive a careful and critical examination, in the light of the fraud and possibilities of fraud which this book lays bare.

Zöllner's accounts of his séances will be found in his book, *Transcendental Physics* (translated by C. C. Massey), in which Professor Zöllner, in addition to recording the phenomena that occurred at the séances, attempted to demonstrate his theory of "space of four dimensions." This theory he adopted in order to explain the phenomena observed in the presence of the medium, and it may be said frankly that that is as likely a theory as any other, — provided the facts are such, in reality, and not mere frauds. There is nothing inherently impossible in the theory;[1] the only thing lacking is the evidence of its reality! The question, then, before us is, as usual, are the phenomena facts, or are they merely the simulation of the facts they appear to be? That can only be settled by a careful examination of the evidence in the case since we cannot, unfortunately, repeat the phenomena at this late date. We can only carefully study the records that are left us, and see whether their perusal points to the fact that the phenomena observed were genuine, or whether they were merely clever tricks; — the result of the medium having deceived the investigator, and caused him to *believe* that the phenomena really occurred, as reported. The medium, in this case, was none other than "Dr." Henry Slade; and we must, accordingly, hastily glance at this medium's previous history, in order to get a clue to the personality of the man we are considering.

The career of Slade, outside of the Zöllner sittings, was indeed not creditable. A brief résumé of this medium's exploits will be found in Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 87-90. The Ray Lankester prosecution, which necessitated Slade leaving England in a hurry, was a heavy blow to his reputation. Mrs. Sidgwick, further, had ten séances with Slade, the general net impression of which was to make

[1] *V. The Seven Follies of Science*, by John Phin, pp. 117-25.

her feel that "the phenomena are produced by tricks."[1] The investigations of the Seybert Commission were not only unsatisfactory — being given under no real "test" conditions,[2] — but the actual process of reading and answering the messages were distinctly *seen* by the sitters on several occasions. "Every step in the process," says the *Report*, pp. 11-12, "we have distinctly *seen*. In order to seize the fragment of pencil without awakening suspicion, while holding the slate under the table, the slate is constantly brought out to see whether or not the spirits have written an answer. By this manœuvre a double end is attained: First, it creates an atmosphere of expectation, and the sitters grow accustomed to a good deal of motion in the medium's arm that holds the slate; and secondly, by these repeated motions, the pencil (which, having been cut out from a slate pencil enclosed in wood, is square, and does not roll about awkwardly) is moved by the successive jerks toward the hand which holds the slate, and is gradually brought up to within grasping distance. The forefinger is then passed over the frame of the slate, and it and the thumb seize and hold the pencil, and, under cover of some violent convulsive spasms, the slate is turned over and the question read. At this point it is that the medium shows his nerve; it is the critical instant, the only one when his eyes are not fastened on his sitters. On one occasion, when the question was written somewhat illegibly in a back hand, with a very light stroke, and close to the upper edge of the slate, the medium had to look at it three several times before he could make it out.

"After reading the question, it may be noticed that Doctor Slade winks three or four times rapidly; this may have been partly to veil from his visitors the fact that he had been looking intently downward, and partly through mental abstraction in devising an answer. He evidently breathes freer when this crisis is past."

But the most conclusive evidence of fraud, in the case of Doctor Slade, is probably that furnished by Truesdell,

[1] *Proceedings*, Vol. IV., p. 56. [2] *Report*, pp. 56-9.

in his *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts.* Here we read that the author detected Slade producing "telekinetic" phenomena with his foot (p. 145); that he saw the movements of the tendons in Slade's wrists when he (Slade) was doing the writing (p. 146); that, by purposely leaving a forged letter in his overcoat pocket, he thereby deceived Slade — receiving messages from the supposedly dead friends and relatives of this non-existent person (p. 150-1); he tells how he discovered a slate in the corner of the medium's séance-room containing a message *already written out*, waiting for some future sitter to receive it (p. 151)! and how, finally, Slade made a full confession to him, evidently stating, under bond of secrecy, just how all his manifestations were produced (pp. 156-7). This confession is most remarkable and apparently little known, though it is not the only one that Slade ever made. Mr. Furness stated to the Seybert Commission (p. 70), that when last he saw Slade in Boston, "he eagerly beckoned me to come in, and, as I settled myself in a chair, I said to him: 'Well, and how are the old spirits coming on?' Whereupon he laughed and replied, 'Oh, pshaw! you never believed in them, did you?'"

Going back to Truesdell's exposure of this medium, we read that on several occasions Slade's foot was seen in the act of producing movements of objects and other phenomena under the table (pp. 286-9); and, at another time, of how the writer shared his bed, and caught Slade in the act of producing manifestations of various kinds — including touches — with his feet! When both his legs were held fast to the bed, by means of his companion's legs being placed across both of them, and his two hands held at the same time, no phenomena of any sort followed!

In relation to the slate-writing phenomena, I cannot refrain from quoting the following passage, which is, to my mind, one of the most amusing passages in the whole history of the subject — though many funny things have happened at the various exposures! Truesdell had entered Slade's séance-room, and found it empty. In one corner he found, however, a slate, upon which was a message already pre-

pared, as before stated. Picking up this slate, the future sitter wrote, under the first message, the words: "Henry! look out for this fellow — he is up to snuff! Alcinda." (This was the name of Slade's deceased wife.) Soon after this the worthy doctor appeared, and the usual séance was given. Then came the climax! After describing the preparations for slate-writing, etc., as usual, he goes on: "A moment later the table began to tremble violently, and Slade appeared much agitated, when we distinctly heard the spirits writing upon the slate! The sound was unmistakable; even the crossings of the t's and the dottings of the i's could be easily distinguished. This was the grandest victory of my life! Inaudibly I exclaimed, 'Eureka! Eureka!' After years of fruitless search for proof of the immortality of man, at last I had found it! There we were, face to face, as it were, with our spirit friends, communicating with them as in earth life, with the unimpeachable testimony of our eyes and ears to establish the fact. At the conclusion of the writing, the doctor raised the slate and turned it over in a triumphant manner, when his eyes fell upon the *two* messages. He seemed appalled! Had a thunderbolt from heaven fallen at his feet, he could not have been more astonished. For several minutes he continued to gaze upon the slate in blank amazement — then, suddenly turning to me, his countenance livid with rage and excitement, he exclaimed, 'What does this mean? Who has been meddling with this slate?' 'Spirits,' I coolly replied. A moment later this manipulator of unseen forces was as mellow as a ripe apple. Fully and freely we conversed together for an hour or more upon the all-important subject of my visit. If I had heretofore been suspicious of the doctor, now every shadow of doubt was expelled! The science of spiritualism was more thoroughly discussed between us than I had ever before heard it, — the doctor taking especial pains to explain to me many of the mysterious methods adopted by the spirits in order to reach those who are yet in the physical form. . . ." And so on, with delightful irony. Indeed, the book is written with such a tremendous amount of veiled

sarcasm that many persons doubt if the author really believes what he says, or not!

It will be seen from all the foregoing, therefore, that the previous career of Slade was anything but free from suspicion — actual fraud having been proved against him in many instances. Such a record would naturally make us suspect that such a medium would not be likely to produce genuine phenomena — at least if there is the least possible loophole left open by which trickery could be practised. In considering the Zöllner séances, however, we must not let these considerations warp our judgment, for two reasons: partly because mediums who produce genuine phenomena on occasion also cheat at times, if the phenomena fail to occur, — as has now been abundantly proved; and partly because we must consider every phenomenon that is presented for our consideration, in the domain of psychical research, as though it were an *isolated* phenomenon, independent from any that have gone before, or any that are to follow after. Each phenomenon must be judged on its own merit, that is; and, in the Slade-Zöllner investigation, we must accordingly set aside all the previous testimony for or against Slade, and examine the séances themselves as though they were the only ones recorded. The extent to which the previous history should influence our minds is this: that, if the opportunity of fraud is shown to exist, and the only bar to the assumption that the medium *did* produce the manifestation in that way is the *moral* objection (as in the Moses case), then we must be willing to set that consideration aside, as valueless, and as constituting no valid evidence in favor of the genuineness of the phenomena.

I must confine myself to a very brief résumé of the experiments mentioned in the book, and shall choose those which are the most extraordinary, and apparently the hardest to account for by normal means. At least this will not bring upon me the charge of being unfair, in my handling of the case, for it may fairly be said that if the *most* extraordinary phenomena can be accounted for and explained (as fraudu-

lent), then, surely, the more simple experiments of the same order may well be explained in a similar manner.

The experiments with the slate need not detain us long. Slade used the method of writing described on p. 104, beyond a doubt — though he often used other methods too. The tests described on p. 60, and elsewhere throughout the book, are easily explainable by some one of the methods described in this volume, and the evidence all goes to show that Slade did actually use the methods described. Mr. Carl Willmann, a manufacturer of magical apparatus at Hamburg, made a careful examination of Slade's double slate, and found that the seals were not by any means in so perfect a condition as has been supposed, and aroused strong suspicions that the seals had, in fact, been tampered with. He found that while, to a superficial examination, the seals appeared perfect, yet a closer examination showed the unmistakable evidences of finger-prints, and Mr. Willmann suggests that the slates were opened by means of a thin, heated wire, which was passed under the seals on the slates — the seals being afterward replaced. The examination he was enabled to make strongly suggested that this was, in fact, the method used. An illustration of this process will be found in *The Old and the New Magic* (p. xxvi), where many valuable criticisms of these experiments are published, — to some of which I shall have occasion to refer later.

The experiments with the compass are interesting, and, while they are not difficult to explain as the result of trickery, if we assume a certain amount of malobservation on the part of Zöllner (which we are entitled to assume, as we shall presently see), they are the only ones that would seem to indicate that Slade did, in reality, possess some supernormal power. The experiment tried was the following:

". . . Arrived at my dwelling, my friend asked whether I had a compass at hand. I brought a celestial globe in the stand, to which a compass was fixed, and placed it on the table. At our request, Slade moved his hand horizontally across the closely fitted glass cover of the magnet case. The needle remained immovable, and I concluded from this that

Slade had no magnet concealed beneath his skin. On a second trial, which was made immediately afterward, in the manner stated, the needle was violently agitated in a way which could only be the result of strong magnetic power," (pp. 52-3). On p. 62 Zöllner gives an account of some experiments in which a knitting-needle was immediately magnetized when placed on a slate — the slate being held under the table by Slade " in the usual manner as for writing. " (See also the account on p. 50.)

It is not hard to conceive that Slade had the opportunity to exchange this needle for another which was magnetized, at the time the slate was held beneath the table; nor that Slade carried a magnet about with him after the first day of such experiments (when he found out the sort of tests to which Zöllner intended to subject him), and that he found an opportunity to use this magnet to good advantage during the course of the experiment. It may be said, in fairness to Slade, however, that this experiment *may* have been perfectly free from fraud, since the same effects have been observed elsewhere, apparently, where no professional medium was concerned. Reichenbach obtained some very similar results with his " sensitives ; " and there is a case recorded in the *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. I., pp. 254-6, which would seem to confirm the results obtained by Zöllner. As, however, these results have not been duplicated of late years (so far as my information goes), and as it is not hard to account for the experiments on the basis of trickery, as suggested, we must at least hold our judgment in suspense and await further details and further experiments before accepting these results as in any way scientific facts.

The only other experiments described that have any semblance to reality, and are not obviously conjuring tricks, are the telekinetic phenomena and the cases of levitation mentioned on pp. 54, 56, and pp. 190-1, respectively. In the first of these we are told that " a small note-table, fixed to a door-post by a movable iron support, began suddenly to move, and so violently that the chair standing in front of it was thrown down with a great noise. These objects were

behind Slade, and at least five feet from him. At the same time and at the same distance, a bookcase, loaded with many books, was violently agitated." If this phenomenon was not genuine (which, in the light of the other tests, we are not entitled to think), it is probable that the table and bookcase were both moved by a heavy black thread — that device so often employed by conjurers to such good effect. The trick, as described, would certainly not prohibit this interpretation of the facts observed, while the experiments described on p. 179, 184, and elsewhere, are obviously performed in this manner, or by means of the medium's hand or the toes of his foot. Truesdell [1] describes a séance in which he himself employed this device undetected, and with great success. As to the "broken screen incident" (p. 54), — where a strong wooden screen was, apparently, wrenched apart in the middle of a séance, with a "violent crack," falling in two pieces, the screws and other fastenings being wrenched from their sockets, — I would ask: what proof have we that this tearing apart was not done before the séance, and the two parts merely tied together by means of a piece of thread, which could be pulled off later, allowing the two halves of the screen to fall apart as stated? There was plenty of time for Slade to "fix" anything he liked before the séance, from all accounts, and there is nothing in the reports which would forbid our assuming that such an interpretation is the right one.

The levitation case is a little more convincing. It is not recorded by Zöllner, as it happens, being merely quoted by him, in his book. The séance at which this levitation occurred was one conducted by Herr Schmid (May, 1878). The account reads: "When I was sitting a little distance from him (Slade), he likewise sitting, he stretched out his arm and laid his hand on the back of my chair. All at once I was raised, with the chair, swaying in the air about a foot high, as if drawn up by a pulley, without any exertion whatever by Slade, who simply raised his hand, the chair following it as if it were a magnet" (p. 190).

This "test" was doubtless performed in the same manner

[1] *Bottom Facts*, pp. 197-8.

as it was on the occasion when Slade "levitated" Professor Fechner. As described, the events are certainly mystifying. "However, when we carefully compare Professor Fechner's account, we come to the conclusion that the whole proceeding is no longer miraculous, but could be repeated by prestidigitateurs. Fechner states that, at the request of Doctor Slade, he himself (Professor Fechner), who was slim and slight, took the place of Professor Braune. Doctor Slade turned round to Professor Fechner and bore his chair upward in a way which is not at all inexplicable by the methods of legerdemain. Professor Fechner does not mention that he hovered for some time in the air, but it is obvious that Doctor Slade made the two professors change seats because he would scarcely have had the strength to lift up Professor Braune." [1]

Of the phenomena mentioned many others hardly deserve our detailed consideration. The case on pp. 184-5, in which Zöllner held the medium's hands while certain phenomena occurred, is certainly a mere variation of the "release" described on p. 189. The "accordion test" (pp. 57-8) was obviously worked as described on p. 200. (The difference in the methods of observing and recording this test adopted by Zöllner and Crookes should be carefully noted.) The streams of water that appeared out of the atmosphere were obviously produced by means of a small pocket syringe, dexterously operated by the skilled hand of the medium. The malobservation present in these experiments is patent to any one reading the reports carefully. The account of the table that vanished from the room of its own accord, and afterward descended gracefully from the ceiling ("the hitherto invisible table with its legs turned upwards, very quickly floating down in the air upon the top of the card-table"), *that* experiment I cannot explain, *if* it occurred as stated. I have strong doubts whether such an event ever transpired, however, — either Zöllner experiencing a visual hallucination, or malobservation and defects in recording have much to answer for. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in a combination of these two factors.

[1] *The Old and the New Magic*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

In the cases in which coins were abstracted from sealed boxes, the experiments are rendered absolutely inconclusive by the fact that Slade had every opportunity to duplicate these boxes, — having examined them before the crucial séance took place (pp. 139, 140-5). It is also conceivable that Slade managed to open the sealed boxes themselves, abstract the coins, and seal them up again, without detection, — as actually happened in the case of the sealed slates (p. 25). Slade might have pried up the edge of the seal with a sharp pen-knife, cut the string passing round the box under the seal, opened the box, abstracted the coins, again closed the box, pushed the cut end of the string *under* the seal, gummed it in place, and replaced the seal by slightly melting the under surface of the seal, thus pried up, with a heated knife blade. The trickery could not be discovered, in such a case, unless the seal were pried off, and the box opened. So long as the box remained *sealed*, however, the trickery could never be detected.

The impressions of naked feet, obtained on sooted paper, placed on the floor under the table, could easily have been done by Slade, and there are strong indications that they *were* produced by him (pp. 67-8, 71, 131-2). It may be true that the impression of the foot obtained was shorter than that of Slade's foot, but this could have been produced, as Zöllner himself points out, " by not putting down the heel and the fore part of the foot at the same time." Slade himself probably made the majority of the impressions in this manner. Zöllner asserts that he at once examined the foot of the medium to see whether any soot or other marks were left upon it that would indicate that Slade had done it himself, and states that he found none. We must accept the statement with extreme caution, however, that Zöllner *at once* examined the medium's foot. It is highly improbable that he did so, in reality, and it is more than likely that Slade had the opportunity to wipe off the telltale marks, and replace his feet in the socks and shoes (low cut) that he wore. The examples of malobservation to be referred to presently will amply justify our doubting the accuracy of this part of

the report. In any event, there was nothing to prevent Slade from using celluloid impressions, which might have been secreted about his person. Mr. Willmann, in his study of the Zöllner sittings, calls attention to the fact that the foot-prints were made from feet whose stockings had been removed but a few moments before, for they still showed the meshes of the knitting which quickly disappear as soon as the skin of the foot grows cold. "Professor Zöllner did not see such trifles, and yet they are important, even if it were for the mere purpose of determining whether the spirits wear stockings made in Germany or America!"

Zöllner describes (pp. 102-9) a most remarkable test, in which two wooden rings were apparently passed on to the leg of a small table, — under conditions which would, from all accounts, appear to be quite beyond the bounds of trickery. The two rings had first passed through them a piece of catgut, the ends of which were tied together and sealed. Medium and sitter then sat quietly together for some time, when a sound was heard from the small table, placed some distance from the medium, and, upon examining the table, it was found that the rings were encircling the leg — it being, apparently, impossible for them to have been placed there by any normal means, since they were no larger than the leg itself, and this central leg terminated at its lowest extremity in a tripod, three small legs branching off in various directions in order to support the table, and the upper end fastened to the table-top. Both ends of the leg on which the rings appeared were thus much larger than the rings themselves, and we should have to suppose, either that the rings were split in some manner, in order to get them on to the table-leg (which we know was not the case, as the rings were examined after they were on the table-leg and found to be sound), or the top of the table must have been taken off and the rings slipped on the table-leg, and the table-top replaced. That this could not have been done *at* the séance is evident. The catgut at the conclusion of the séance was, needless to say, *minus* the two rings.

This is a very remarkable manifestation, from any point

of view whatsoever. I have carefully read the report of this phenomenon, and am convinced that it could have been managed by adroit trickery. I venture to suggest the following explanation of what transpired on that memorable occasion, — it appearing to me that this theory of the phenomenon is not contradicted by the account, as it stands.

Slade had the opportunity of examining the two rings *prior* to the séance at which they were " miraculously " passed on to the table-leg, as above described. He had exact *duplicates* made of these rings, and, at some convenient moment, exchanged these for the originals — all this transpiring *before* the séance was held, and possibly at some earlier time on the very day of the séance. Slade now unscrewed the top of the small table, and passed on to the leg the two *original* rings. He then fastened the top of the small table in place again. These two rings he now tied together by means of a piece of black silk thread, fastening both rings, thus secured, to the table-leg, *immediately under* the top of the table, — so that, unless the sitter should deliberately stoop down and look under the table, they would be invisible to him. To the thread fastening the two rings together was also attached a long thread (several feet in length), this being coiled up and attached to the table-leg in some manner, so as to be readily grasped by the hand, and arranged so that it would unwind, as pulled.

Zöllner would now have fastened the two *duplicate* rings together by means of the catgut, and Slade could either have abstracted these rings in the process of fastening the catgut ends together, or have substituted *another* piece of catgut, without rings, at some time during the course of the experiment — say, when he was entertaining Professor Zöllner with clairvoyant visions of lights, etc. (p. 109).

It may be presumed, since there is no evidence to the contrary, that Slade himself placed the tables in position. When placing the smaller table in position, then, he secretly gained possession of the silk thread, and carried one end of it with him to his seat. The séance then proceeded as described. At the proper moment, Slade pulled the thread with a quick

jerk, breaking the thread passing around the two rings (that which fastened them together, and to the under side of the table-top), and allowing them to fall down on to the table-leg itself — into the position described. When all eyes were turned in the direction of the table, Slade would have had an opportunity to pull away the black thread, — thus concealing the last traces of the *modus operandi.*

Such a version of this experiment is, I suggest, most probably the right one. Zöllner apparently never thought of examining the under side of the small table just before the séance, when the rings were in position. He never thought, in all probability, that the two rings he placed upon the catgut were other than his own two rings, as he did not examine these at that time, either. He *assumed* that they were the same, because he never thought of there being any others. Slade could easily have manipulated the rings so as to make them disappear, at some time during the séance. He would not have ventured to allow Zöllner to place his own rings on the catgut, and place the duplicates on the table-leg, as he knew that the critical examination of the rings would come *after* the séance, when the rings were in place, on the table-leg, and then substitutes would have been easily detected. He accordingly adopted the bolder plan of substituting the rings earlier in the séance, as suggested — this enabling the *real* rings to be found on the table-leg, and trusting to chance that Professor Zöllner would not make too careful an examination of the rings just before the séance. This bolder method was successful, — the result being a brilliant success, as shown. I offer this explanation of the phenomenon, believing that it may possibly be the correct interpretation of the puzzling facts narrated.

There are one or two facts which would seem to bear out this interpretation of the case, more or less indirectly. The records do this for one thing, though I cannot go through them all here, for such confirmatory proofs. There is, of course, the *presumption* that any such a test as that described could not be possible — the passage of matter through matter, "apports" — being scientifically almost unthinkable,

though not quite so. There is the evidence, too, that all such cases have hitherto been unable to withstand too exact a scrutiny, as illustrated in the case of the medium Haxby, who came before the S. P. R. with an iron ring upon his arm, apparently too small for it to have been placed there by any normal means.[1] A close investigation showed, however, that, by etherizing the hand, and rendering the patient insensible for the time being, the ring could be made to pass on or off the medium's arm — though the committee did not feel justified in conducting the experiment. The history of the subject gives us no similar case of the successful passage of rings, etc., on to legs or arms, human or otherwise, that cannot be explained as the result of fraud.

There is one very clever "test" that is sometimes performed, which would seem to show that something of this sort *is* accomplished. It is, however, nothing more than an ingenious trick, and this might be a good time to explain its *modus operandi*. The general effect of the illusion is this: The medium requests some one to assist him in an experiment in which he is going to attempt to pass "matter through matter." As the test is one in which a confederate might easily be employed, he is very careful to choose some person who is well known, or whose character is above all suspicion. If this were not so, the entire effect of the test would be lost upon the investigators. Having secured his assistant, he hands him, for examination, a solid steel ring, just large enough to slip on and off the hand and arm easily. The ring is perfectly solid, and may be examined by any one desirous of doing so. When this part of the performance is finished, the medium and his sitter then join or clasp their right hands (as in handshaking), and the sitter is instructed not to release the hand for a single instant. To "make assurance doubly sure," however, the hands are fastened together in any way the sitters may desire; the hands being tied together with tape, *e. g.*, and the ends of this tape tied and the knots sealed. The tape connects the wrists and the hands of the medium and his sitter, and this tying may be made as secure as possible.

[1] *Proceedings*, Vol. III., pp. 460-3.

A piece of thick cloth is now thrown over the two hands and the lower part of the arms, — concealing them from view. With his disengaged hand, the medium now takes the iron ring and passes it up under the cloth, so as to bring it in contact with his own arm. He holds it there for some time, but ultimately snatches off the covering cloth, and reveals to the eyes of the astonished audience the ring — now encircling his own arm — in spite of the fact that the ties are still *in statu quo*, and the sitter never let go his hold for an instant. The ties and the ring may again be examined, if desired, before the hands are separated.

This is an exceedingly effective test, and has every appearance of being genuine — indeed, it is hard to see where trickery can come in, and for this reason is far better (because far more under the control of the sitters) than such a test as that of Zöllner's, discussed above. The trick is one of the simplest imaginable, however, and is performed in the following manner.

The medium has provided himself with *two* rings exactly alike; one of these the audience is free to examine, the other the medium is wearing on his right arm, under his coat. When the two hands are clasped together, therefore, it is a simple thing for the medium, under cover of the enveloping cloth, to slip the duplicate ring down his sleeve, and on to his own hand, and that part of the "miracle" is accomplished! It remains only to explain what becomes of the first ring. The cloth thrown over the arms is very thick and stiff, as stated, and the inner side of this contains a double partition, or sort of bag, into which the medium slips the duplicate ring. The cloth may now be shown on both sides, without disclosing the ring, and the medium makes away with it as soon as possible, in order to avoid detection.

It will be observed that, in the above test, duplicate rings are employed; the first being in place before the experiment commences; and it seems to me that a very similar explanation might suffice to explain that most puzzling of all Zöllner's "tests." The presence of the duplicate ring is certainly never suspected in *this* case, — even when the sitters

are more than ordinarily acute; and, that being the case, it is surely not too much to suppose that Zöllner may have been deceived by some very similar method.

I come, lastly, to a consideration of the most famous of all the Zöllner tests — the rope-tying experiments, in which knots were apparently tied in a cord, the two ends of which were sealed together very securely, Professor Zöllner placing his signet on the knots in each case. These were the experiments that caused Professor Zöllner to conceive his theory of space of four dimensions in order to account for the knots appearing in these cords. Without considering the theory, however, let us at once turn to the experiments, and see whether they are of a probable fraudulent or genuine character.

Zöllner thus describes the preparations of the cords for his famous experiments. He took a hempen cord, tied the ends together in an ordinary knot, fixed this knot to a piece of paper with wax, sealing the wax carefully, and cutting off the paper round the seal. The ends of the cord were thus securely fastened to the card, besides being tied and sealed themselves. The account goes on (p. 42):

"The above described sealing of two such strings, with my own seal, was effected by myself in my apartments, on the evening of December 16th, 1877, at nine o'clock, under the eyes of several of my friends and colleagues, and *not* in the presence of Mr. Slade. Two other strings of the same quality and dimensions were sealed by William Weber with *his* seal, and in his own rooms, on the morning of the 17th of December, at 10.30 A. M. With these four cords I went to the neighboring dwelling of one of my friends. . . . The séance in question took place in my friend's sitting-room immediately after my arrival. I myself selected one of the four sealed cords, and, in order never to lose sight of it, before we sat down at the table, I hung it around my neck, — the seal in front always within my sight. During the séance, as previously stated, I constantly kept the seal — remaining unaltered — before me on the table. Mr. Slade's hands remained all the time in sight; with the left he often touched

his forehead, complaining of painful sensations. The portion of the string hanging rested on my lap, — out of my sight, it is true, — but Mr. Slade's hands *always* remained visible to me. I particularly noticed that Mr. Slade's hands were not withdrawn or changed in position. He himself appeared to be perfectly passive, so that we cannot advance the assertion of his having tied these knots by his *conscious* will, but only that they, under these detailed circumstances, were formed in his *presence* without visible contact, and in a room illuminated by bright daylight."

Such is the record. It is certainly remarkable that, under the conditions named, four knots were formed in the cord before this séance was concluded — knots such as could not possibly have been tied unless the ends of the cord were free. The test is, apparently, so perfect that it would seem almost impossible to show that it contained flaws of such a character as to render the evidence quite valueless, from a scientific point of view. Such, however, is the case, as it now becomes necessary to show.

The possible methods that might have been made use of by Slade, in obtaining knots in this manner (or at least under very similar conditions), will be described in detail presently. For the moment, I desire only to draw attention to the imperfections in the report itself, and point out the loopholes and possibilities of fraud that Professor Zöllner overlooked, in drawing up his report. The actual explanations (if such they are, indeed) will come later. Let us pave the way for such explanations, then, by a consideration of the report, — thereby showing where such possible methods of trickery as those suggested might, perhaps, have been practised. This critical work has been done in such an excellent manner in the quotations that follow that I cannot do better than to give them to the reader *verbatim*. This I do accordingly; after which discussion we shall probably be in a better condition to consider the methods that might actually have been employed in these famous séances. First, then, there is the most important criticism made by Mrs.

Sidgwick,[1] *viz.*, that Zöllner omitted mention of certain most important events that had happened, and which formed, in a way, the clue to the mystery. Thus:

". . . In describing the séance on December 17, 1877, when he obtained four knots in a string of which the ends were tied and sealed together, he omits to mention that the experiment had been tried and failed before. We learn this was so, accidentally as it were, from his mentioning it in another place and in another connection,[2] where he tells us that it was a long time before the spirits understood what kind of knot was required of them, and that, before they did so, he obtained knots, but not such as he wanted — knots, I infer, which could be made by ordinary beings without undoing the string. Now this fact obviously affects the value of the experiment, for it makes it possible that Doctor Slade may have prepared a string similar to Professor Zöllner's at home, and brought it with him, and, notwithstanding Professor Zöllner's watchfulness, have changed it." Mrs. Sidgwick suggests that the time when trickery was most probably employed was at the period of arranging the ropes on the table — a very good guess, as we shall presently see. For the present, I am, however, concerned with an examination of the defective nature of the record, and not with suggestions of how the feats were actually performed. Let us proceed with our examination of the evidence, therefore, considering only the character of the record, as such.

Besides the above defects in the account, then, Professor Hyslop has pointed out *eleven* possible sources of error, — any one of which would have facilitated fraud, while, taken together, and in conjunction with the previous criticisms, they leave hardly a shred of respectable evidence for supernormal phenomena in these famous Zöllner-Slade experiments, which have been paraded before the skeptical world for these twenty years. I quote Professor Hyslop's criticisms at length, as they seem to me very fine indeed.

"(1) We should note the disproportionate amount of

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., p. 65.
[2] *Abhandlungen*, Vol. II., p. 1191.

detail in the description of the preparations for the experiment and in the experiment itself. This is the natural habit of the physicist, who either imagines that the preparation is the main thing, or leaves to others the verification of his work. But the point where he should have shown the most care and the most minute description was during the performance. (2) He does not say anything whatever about the history of the other three cords which he took with him. We should know where they were put during the performance, and what became of them. (3) We are not told anything to show that he had compared the cord with the knots in it after the séance with the cord as taken to Slade. It ought to have been accurately measured after the performance to see if any difference between it, then and before, could be detected. In other words, Zöllner should have assumed the possibility of substituting one cord for another, which he thought he had excluded. (4) He does not tell us whether he examined the paper afterward on which the wax seals were pasted. Whether a substitute cord was possible or not, this examination should have been made, as an evidential precaution. (5) He says nothing about any careful examination of the seals to show that they were identical with those he had put on the knotted end of the cord. (6) He does not say a word about the amount of time employed in the experiment or the tying of the 'fourth dimension knots.' . . . (7) He does not give any details that went on between the time of sitting down at the table and the final tying of the knots. Here was a crucial moment when the most minute account of the experiment should have been made. (8) He does not say when the account of the experiment was written. To give it value, it should have been from notes made on the occasion and written out immediately afterward. (9) Though very careful to give the dates on which the cords were prepared, no care is taken to tell us when or on what dates the experiment was performed. (10) We are not told whether Slade touched or examined the cord in his own hands or not. (11) No indication is given regarding the chances

that Slade may have had to examine the friend's cord and to be prepared for a reproduction of Zöllner's." [1]

In addition to all the foregoing objections, I would point out the following sources of error, and examples of mal-observation which practically invalidate the experiments, so far as scientific proof is concerned. (1) The experiments were seldom those asked for, but usually one planned by Slade, or one that happened spontaneously. (Zöllner admits this on p. 110.) This would seem to indicate that the tests planned by Zöllner were too difficult for Slade, and he had to get out of the difficulty by performing others. (2) In speaking of the slate-tests, where writing was obtained on slates placed on a table, and untouched by Slade, he says: "They (the slates) were laid on or close to the corner of the card-table" (p. 60), without saying *who* placed them there. If Slade placed the slates in that position — as he very likely did — then it should certainly have been so stated, for it is highly probable that the opportunity for fraud occurred just at that moment. In all séances of the kind, in all accounts of any supernormal phenomena, in which a professional medium is engaged, it is quite useless to state that "the slates were placed on the table," etc. — without saying *who* placed them there. In reading over accounts of slate-writing séances, it is very seldom that we find it specifically stated who performed each action, though this is the very *crux* of the whole case. This same lack of observation of important details is observed in Professor Wagner's *Report* (p. 131). (3) Slade was often allowed to suggest the experiments that were to be tried himself (p. 61). He would doubtless have suggested tests for which he was amply prepared. (4) Slade frequently diverted the sitter's attention from the real issue by turning aside either to try some other experiment (p. 66), or by diverting the sitter's attention by such devices as clairvoyant visions, etc. (p. 109). (5) The sitters followed the direction of "the spirits," when told, *e. g.*, to leave the slates on the table for four séances (p. 131), though this obviously is absurd, in the case of a me-

[1] *Borderland of Psychical Research*, pp. 235-7.

dium like Slade. It deprives the writing obtained ultimately of all evidential value.

In addition to the foregoing objections, there are the very grave ones made by the Seybert Commission, printed in their *Report*, pp. 104-14. Finding their own evidence so negative, yet impressed, to a certain extent, with Zöllner's book, *Transcendental Physics*, the members of the commission were uncertain what course to pursue with regard to this investigation, when they received a detailed account from one of their number, Mr. George S. Fullerton, of personal interviews with the four professors who endorsed Slade's phenomena — Zöllner, Fechner, Scheibner, and Weber. This account clearly shows that both Fechner and Scheibner were partially blind at the time, and depended more on what Zöllner told them was taking place than on what they could see for themselves; while Weber was, in many ways, an incompetent witness of such phenomena. As to Zöllner, the chief narrator, it was found that he was of slightly unsound mind (though all his associates admitted that this did not impair his capacity as an investigator or observer); that he was bent on proving his theory of space of four dimensions; that he was, in many ways, an incautious observer and believer; and, lastly, and by far the most important point of all, is the fact that neither he nor any of his three colleagues knew anything whatever of conjuring or the possibilities of deception. With such a mass of evidence against him, it seems unnecessary to insist upon the fact that the testimony of such an observer is practically valueless, so far as it is intended to prove the supernormal character of facts such as these.

It may be replied to all this that we have the evidence of Bellachini, court conjurer, that the phenomena observed in Slade's presence were *not* due to trickery, or explainable by any of the devices known to conjurers (pp. 213-4). This evidence does not weigh very heavily against the more positive testimony, however, for several reasons. In the first place, very little was known in those days of the tricks of mediums, even by conjurers themselves. It is only of late years that the information has leaked out and become

more or less public property. Then, too, we learn that Bellachini was (at that time, at least) entirely ignorant of the methods of fraudulent mediums.[1] Many conjurers were and are entirely ignorant of the methods employed by fraudulent mediums, and, as Mr. Davey pointed out,[2] *in this particular branch of investigation* they are often no more informed than the ordinary person — or were, as this is not true, nowadays. We must remember, finally, that both Robert Houdin and Harry Kellar were convinced that the spiritualistic performances they witnessed were genuine, though both, afterward, retracted their opinions and even succeeded in duplicating the medium's performance by fraudulent means! Kellar's "Open Letter," stating that he could not account for the manifestations observed at a séance (Eglinton being the medium), is to be found in *Psychic Notes*, Calcutta, February 10th, 1882. Houdin's statement is in *Mahatma*, Vol. I., No. 6, August, 1895.

It is hardly necessary to review, further, the historical evidence in the case of Zöllner, as it has already been shown to be open to so many objections that further proof is unnecessary. I shall, accordingly, turn to the discussion of the probable actual methods that Slade employed in procuring the knots on the endless cord, and discuss, incidentally, several methods of obtaining such knots in ropes, which may be of interest in the present connection.

I think we need have no hesitation in asserting that the method Slade followed, in producing the knots in the cords that were sealed by Zöllner and brought by him to the séance, was the following, which can be very easily done, provided the sitters are not too sharp-witted and acute, as we are tolerably sure Zöllner was not! We know that Slade had the opportunity to examine the ropes before the séance, since (although Zöllner omitted to mention this fact in his *Transcendental Physics*) the experiment had been previously tried and had failed (*v.* p. 37). Slade, then, knew the character of the experiment that was to be tried, and had every

[1] *V. Round the World with a Magician and a Juggler*, p. 168.
[2] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., p. 411.

opportunity to examine the length, character, etc., of the rope used for the experiment, and to duplicate it in the interval. He had also, beyond doubt, the opportunity to have made a *duplicate seal*, — exactly similar to Zöllner's own, — and to seal up the ends of the cords after having tied them in the same manner as the original cords were tied. He now had a duplicate set of cords, exactly similar to those of Zöllner's. Just before the séance, Slade secreted in his right sleeve one of these duplicate cords, so arranged that the seal came just within his cuff, and could be readily reached by the fingers of either hand at the opportune moment. On this cord there were, of course, the four knots, already tied, this having been done before the ends of the cord were sealed.

Now, when the seal and ends of the cord were being arranged on the table, Slade extracted the duplicate seal from his right sleeve, and placed it on the table, at the same moment covering the seal of the original cord with one of his hands — " palming " it, in fact — so that we now have the trick half-accomplished; the seal having been exchanged for that on Slade's own cord, and that *being* the one now in sight, while the loop of the rope still visible was the original of Professor Zöllner's — Slade's being still secreted in his sleeve (see Fig. 1, p. 44). Slade now gathered up the cord into a bundle, preparatory to handing it to Zöllner, and, at the same time, he gradually pulled his right arm backward, thereby extracting the duplicate cord which was hidden in his sleeve, until this was all extracted, and in his hands. It now became merely a question of secreting the original cord of Professor Zöllner's, for it would have been impossible to have distinguished the fact that there were two cords rolled up together, the tangled mass rendering this quite impossible. Slade now had *both* cords in his hand, therefore, and he let his hand sink below the surface of the table for the fraction of a second, in handing the cord to Professor Zöllner, allowing the original cord, in that instant, to drop into his lap, where it was at once seized upon by the disengaged hand and thrust into a convenient pocket. Zöllner now had,

in his hands, the cord on which were the four knots, and the trick was virtually done. Slade had to prevent Zöllner from discovering this fact, however, and assisted Professor Zöllner in arranging the cord around his neck — a courtesy that Zöllner doubtless gracefully accepted. Slade saw to it, in this arrangement, that, while the seal rested on the table, in full sight of all, the portion of the rope containing the knots fell under the edge of the table — that part of the loop which Zöllner admits was not within his sight. It was on this portion of the cord that the knots were found, it must be remembered — also that four knots were formed, instead of only one, as requested (p. 41). It is obvious that the trick is now done — all that remained for Slade to do was to triumphantly disclose the knots at the proper moment.

All that we have to assume, in order to accept this explanation of the facts as the true one, is that there was a very slight amount of malobservation and lack of memory present on the part of the recorder of the séance, and, in view of the evidence printed above, it will surely not be difficult to assume that such was, in fact, the case. Whether the above explanation of the facts is the true one or not, of course I cannot say; but there is nothing in the evidence which would prohibit us from thinking that such is the case, and I accordingly offer this explanation to my readers as a possible way out of the difficulty.

I shall now give one or two methods of obtaining knots in cords by other means than those described above, but which will be of especial interest to us as illustrating the possibilities of fraud in this connection. The first of these "tests" is very similar to that of Zöllner's, except that the rope is, in this case, *sealed to the table-top*. The two ends of the rope are laid on the table, and sealing-wax applied in the usual manner. It may be sealed, if desired, as in Zöllner's experiment. The lights are now lowered for a few moments, at the end of which period they are again turned up, and, lo and behold! the rope contains two, three or more knots, though the seals on the table are undisturbed and unbroken. This

is a very clever test and is worked in practically the same manner as the last one. The medium has, secreted up his sleeve, a duplicate cord, and, when the two ends of the rope are placed upon the table to be waxed over, he substitutes the two ends of his own cord for those of his sitter, and *these* are the ends that are sealed to the table-top. The loop of the skeptic's cord is hanging down in full sight of the sitters (the ends being concealed by the medium's hand, which is holding the other rope to the table), while the rope containing the knots is quietly reposing in his sleeve. When the lights are turned down, therefore, all the medium has to do is to pull out the hidden cord from his sleeve, allowing it to fall into its natural position, and hide the duplicate cord in his pocket. The cord, seals, etc., may now be examined to the sitters' hearts' content — since they have not, in reality, been tampered with in any way.

There is a clever test, in which a number of knots are obtained in a cord which has just been coiled up before the sitters' eyes, — after having been examined and found to be free from preparation. The medium takes the rope, coils it up, gives the two ends of the rope to some sitter to knot and seal in any manner he may see fit — he being allowed to take the rope into his own possession in order to do this, if desired. There is no trickery about the knotting and sealing of the ends of the cord, since this is done altogether by the sitters themselves; and it would be impossible for the medium to substitute another cord, in this instance, since the cord may be marked in any way desired. The lights are lowered, while the medium holds the rope in his hands, and, though they are only extinguished for a few *seconds*, nevertheless, when the room is again illuminated, the cord is found to contain a number of genuine knots, the seals still being intact, and the rope the same one knotted by the sitters, as an examination will show. This test is very mystifying, and is, in many respects, far superior to the test that Zöllner witnessed through the mediumship of Slade.

In this case, the trick consists almost entirely in the method of coiling the rope. The cord is not exchanged, and the

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

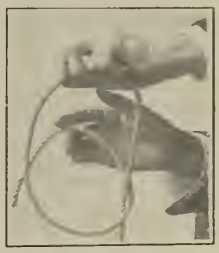


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

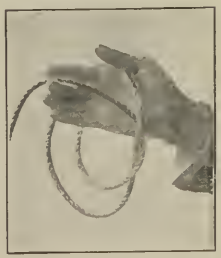


Fig. 5

seals are not unfastened. It is not necessary. The medium takes the cord in his right hand at a distance of about one foot from the end, in the manner shown in Fig. II. The left hand now takes up a loop of the rope in the manner shown in Fig. III., and passes this over the hand as shown in Fig. IV. He does this with every loop made, and it will now be found that, at the conclusion of the coiling, when the end of the rope is reached, if the original end, first held in the hand, be passed *through* all the loops, as shown in Fig. V., the effect will be to tie as many knots in the rope as there were loops made. The trick is already done, for all the medium had to do, under cover of the darkness, was to pull out the rope to its full extent — thereby knotting it — and coil it up again as it was before. This might even be done under the table in full light, if desired. The success depends altogether on the air of ease and naturalness with which the medium performs every action, and his impressing upon the sitters that the important part of the test does not commence until the sealing is begun, — when the experiment *apparently* begins. In reality, that is where it ends, for the trick is already done!

There is another ingenious test in which knots are obtained in a cord that is attached to the wrists of two of the sitters — being sealed on to them, if desired. Each end of the cord is securely tied to the wrist of some sitter, and sealed. The two sitters are now requested to stand up at some distance from one another, while the lights are lowered. The rope is quite long, in this case, and is coiled up in a heap, and placed between the sitters, on the floor of the séance-room. When the lights are again turned up, there are several knots on the rope, though the sitters declare that the ends of the rope have remained firmly fastened to their wrists throughout.

This "test" is worked in the following manner. When the lights are extinguished, the medium picks up the coil of rope, and holds it in his right hand. Going up to one of his two sitters, he now slips it *over his head*, and allows it to drop to the floor, — all unknown to the sitter, as the medium has taken special pains to see that the rope did not touch him

in its passage to the floor (*v.* Fig. VI.). The medium now requests this sitter to change his position a few feet, and guides him to some place where he will be free from the ropes. It will now be seen that the whole body of one of the sitters has passed *through* the loops of the rope, and there are, accordingly, a number of knots formed in the rope — the number depending on the number of coils made in it. As in all other cases, the trick is done under the sitters' noses, and in a manner which they would in no wise suspect.

There is a method of obtaining a knot in a short, single piece of rope, which the medium merely tosses into the empty cabinet with one hand. When picked up, however, some seconds later, it is found to contain a knot loosely tied in the middle of the cord. This is done in the following manner, by the medium himself. The trick is performed in the act of throwing the rope into the cabinet. The medium takes hold of the rope near one of its ends, the rope passing across the palm of the hand. The long end of the rope is allowed to hang down, the short end being grasped between the thumb and the finger of the hand. The hand and arm are now given a kind of circular sweep, this causing the long or lower portion of the rope to swing under, then over, the wrist, and across the fingers of the hand. This end is then seized between the fingers and drawn through the loop just made; at the same time the loop is dropped off the wrist as the rope is tossed into the cabinet. This all becomes one quick action, after a little practice — I myself have performed it in such a manner that a close observer could scarcely detect the action on my part, though knowing the secret of the trick, and what to look for.

I conclude this chapter by giving a very clever test, described by Robinson, in his *Spirit Slate Writing*, pp. 84-5, in which a knot is made to *dis*appear from the centre of a piece of string, where it is tied, the ends of the string being sealed together.

"A single knot is tied in the centre of a piece of string; now the ends are tied together and the knots sealed. The lights are turned down; on their again being turned up, the

Fig. 6

knot in the centre of the cord has disappeared. The moment there was darkness, the medium started to work, and kept slipping the knot along the string until it joined the rest at the top of the string, where there is not much fear of its being seen. To further protect himself he uses the following plan: He chews gum colored the same as the sealing-wax used. Now, in the dark, when he has the single knot up against the others, at the end of the string, he covers this knot with part of the chewing gum, and blends it with the sealing-wax."

CHAPTER III

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DECEPTION

THERE is so much to be said in connection with this question of the "psychology of deception," that the present chapter will have to be merely a brief résumé of the subject, indicating the most important points to bear in mind relative to the particular phase of the subject we are considering — the psychology of conjuring deceptions and fraudulent mediumistic tricks. The object is to enable the reader to see, more easily, how it is that the watchful observer is deceived into believing that a thing is so, when in reality it is not, and *vice versa;* and also to give an idea of the various methods employed by the medium in order to accomplish his results.

I must first of all call the reader's attention to one or two rules which every conjurer learns at the commencement of his study, and which he learns to apply so constantly that it becomes second nature to him. The first is: never let the eyes rest on the hand that is performing the "sleight," but always on the other hand, or on some object on the table or elsewhere, as this will have a tendency to draw the eyes of the audience to that point also. The sitters or audience will always look at the point closely watched by the magician, — their eyes have a tendency to follow his, and wherever he looks, there will the onlooker look also. Needless to say, the magician makes use of this fact, and many tricks and illusions are dependent upon it for their successful accomplishment. Whenever the magician or medium looks intently at one hand, therefore, the *other* hand should be watched, as it is a sure sign that *that* is the hand which is performing the trick.

Another fundamental rule that is observed by all sleight-of-hand performers is: never to let an audience know beforehand what is to be done; *i. e.*, the nature of the trick that it is intended to perform. If the spectator knew what was forthcoming, he would be on the lookout for movements of the performer at certain critical times, — just at the periods when close observation is least wanted, — and would quite possibly detect the performer in the act of executing certain movements which would show how the trick was performed. But not knowing what is coming, the spectator is unable to watch closely at the critical moment — not knowing what that moment is — and so is unable to detect the trick, his attention being diverted by the performer, just before this movement is made, to some other object or movement.

The methods of diverting the spectator's attention are various. There is the use of the eyes, as before shown. Then there is the spoken word, the performer telling the onlookers to observe some certain object or action, and the effect is to cause them to watch it, as they are told. They follow the line of least resistance. The combined effect upon the spectator of the spoken word and the eyes together is generally irresistible.

Another important factor is this. A performer should always let any suggestion, right or wrong, soak well into the spectator's mind before attempting to change it. This is for two reasons. In the first place, if the suggestion is correct, if, *e. g.*, the performer really *does* place an object in his left hand, and it is shortly found to have vanished from that hand, he is annoyed by hearing some one say that he was not really sure it was there in the first place, as "it was covered up so quickly." If, on the other hand, the suggestion given was a false one, if, *e. g.*, the performer says he has placed an object in his left hand, when, in reality, he has not done so but has palmed it in the right, then it is still necessary to allow a certain time-interval to elapse between the performing of the action which apparently placed the object in the hand, and the showing of the hand empty, for this reason. If the hand into which the object is supposedly placed is *immedi-*

ately shown empty, the natural conclusion of the sitter is that the object was not in reality placed there at all, but was retained in the other hand, which would be the fact. If, however, the performer allowed some time to elapse, between the action of placing the object in that hand (supposedly) and the showing of the hand empty, he, meanwhile, keeping his eyes fixed on the hand, suggesting to the sitters that the object *is* there, and in every way acting as if it *were* there, the idea will gradually gain a firm hold on the minds of the spectators that the object is there, in reality, and they are correspondingly surprised to find it ultimately vanished. It is just such a knowledge of "the way people's minds work," as a friend once said to me, which enables the conjurer to deceive the public; and it is precisely the same cast of mind that the medium possesses. He is, in fact, a good judge of human nature.

Another fact that must be borne in mind is that, when once a spectator has seen a movement made two or three times in the same manner, he frequently "sees" the performer make that movement on another occasion, when the performer had, in reality, only *started* to make the movement, and suggested the rest. Thus, if the performer throws a ball up into the air two or three times in succession, and on the fourth occasion merely pretends to throw it up, really retaining it in the other hand, the great majority of the spectators will really "see" the ball ascend into the air on the fourth occasion, and will so state, on being asked. We here depend upon association and habit.[1]

Professor Jastrow summed up this portion of the psychology of deception very well when he said:[2]

"He (the conjurer) must dissociate the natural factors of his habits, actually attending to one thing while seemingly attending to another; at the same time his eyes and his gestures and his 'patter' misdirect the attention to what is apparently the essential field of operation, but really only

[1] A very similar illusion is mentioned by Professor Hyslop, v. *Borderland of Psychical Research*, pp. 228-9, in which pellets were apparently placed in a box, really being palmed in the medium's hand.

[2] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, pp. 124-5.

a blind to distract attention away from the true scene of action. The conjurer directs your attention to what he does not do; he does not do what he pretends to do; and to what he actually does, he is careful neither to appear to direct his own attention nor to arouse yours."

Prof. Max Dessoir, in a very fine article on "The Psychology of Conjuring," writes as follows: "By awakening interest in some unimportant detail, the conjurer concentrates that attention on some false point, or negatively, diverts it from the main object, and we all know the senses of an inattentive person are pretty dull. . . . When causing the disappearance of some object, the conjurer counts one, two, three; the object must really disappear before three, not at three, because, the attention of the public being diverted to three, they do not notice what happens at one and two. . . . A specially successful method of diversion is founded on the human craze for imitation. . . . The conjurer counts on this in many cases. He always looks in the direction where he wants the attention of the public, and does everything himself which he wants the public to do. . . . If the trick is in the left hand, the conjurer turns sharply to the person to his right, presuming correctly that the spectators will make the same movement, and will not notice what is going on in the left hand. . . . Every sharp, short remark will, for a moment, at least, divert the eyes from the hands and direct them to the mouth, according to the above mentioned law of imitation."

The successful conjurer has carefully studied beforehand every movement that is made, — every word that is spoken, — during a conjuring performance, and has seen that these all fit naturally into place, and help conceal the real workings of the trick. The right and left hands must be trained to operate independently, and without the need of looking at either. Many conjurers practise doing two separate things at the same time, one with either hand; and the ability to do this is essential. Above all, the performer must be full of conscious self-possession, and feel himself to be master

of the situation, no less than to feel the ability to cope with any emergencies that may arise.

Turning, now, to a consideration of the séance, we find that many of these psychological rules still hold good, and their operation enables the medium to perform many actions which would otherwise be impossible. A certain suggestion is given to the sitters, and imagination and inference do the rest. " Our conclusions as to what we see or hear are always founded on a combination of observation and inference; but in daily life it is seldom necessary to distinguish between the two elements, since, when the object and its mode of presentation are familiar, our inferences are generally correct. But it is different when, owing to circumstances, such as a bad light, we have to infer more in proportion to what we perceive than usual; or when some one, *e. g.*, a conjurer or a ventriloquist, is trying to deceive us by presenting one object under the familiar aspect of another, and suggesting false inferences. It is not uncommon to find people at séances encouraging each other in the belief that they see, say, a living human figure, when all that they actually *see* is something moving which is about the size of a human being; the rest is inference." [1] How true these last remarks are is demonstrated by the statement, made in *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium* (p. 92), that an old wire mask frequently used at materializing séances had been recognized " by dozens of persons as fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, cousins, sweethearts, wives, husbands, and various other relatives and friends. None but the medium knew that it was only a fifty-cent wire mask, hence none but the medium could enjoy the humor of the occasion."

One of the most instructive incidents I know, in relation to this question of the psychology of deception, is the one given by Doctor Hodgson,[2] — the case of the officer and the Hindu juggler. In this case, a trick was performed before an English officer and his wife, and Doctor Hodgson happened to overhear this officer telling some travellers of the

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., p. 63.
[2] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 385-6.

experience at dinner that evening. "Referring to the movements of the coins, he said that he had taken a coin from his own pocket and placed it on the ground himself, yet that this coin had indulged in the same freaks as the other coins. His wife ventured to suggest that the juggler had taken the coin and placed it on the ground, but the officer was emphatic in repeating his statement, and appealed to me for confirmation. He was, however, mistaken. I had watched the transaction with special curiosity, as I knew what was necessary for the performance of the trick. The officer had apparently intended to place the coin upon the ground himself, but as he was doing so, the juggler leant slightly forward, dexterously and in a most unobtrusive manner received the coin from the fingers of the officer, as the latter was stooping down, and laid it close to the others. If the juggler had not thus taken the coin, but had allowed the officer himself to place it on the ground, the trick, as actually performed, would have been frustrated.

"Now I think it highly improbable that the movement of the juggler entirely escaped the perception of the officer; highly improbable, that is to say, that the officer was absolutely unaware of the juggler's action at the moment of its happening; but I suppose that, although an impression was made on his consciousness, it was so slight as to be speedily effaced by the officer's *imagination* of himself as stooping and placing the coin upon the ground. The officer, I may say, had obtained no insight into the *modus operandi* of the trick, and his fundamental misrepresentation of the only patent occurrence that might have given him a clue to its performance debarred him completely from afterward, in reflection, arriving at any explanation. Just similarly, many an honest witness may have described himself as having placed one slate upon another at a sitting with a medium, whereas it was the medium who did so, and who possibly effected at the same time one or two other operations altogether unnoticed by the witness."

In reading through descriptions of slate-writing séances, we very seldom find the statement made as to *who* placed the

slates on the table, or under the table, etc., generally the account reading "the slates were then placed on the table," without any qualifying statement as to *who* placed them there. Accounts of this kind are absolutely worthless, from an evidential standpoint. We must at once ask ourselves: who placed the slates in that position? and if it was the medium, — as it probably was in the vast majority of instances, — then that test, in all probability, ceases to have any evidential weight. Any one can read over a number of accounts of slate-writing performances, and verify these statements, if he chooses to do so. Frequently, the statement is made that the sitter did actually place the slate on the table, when in reality the medium did so. This error is quite unconscious on the sitter's part, of course, but the account is falsified, nevertheless. Mistakes of this kind are very common, the sitter thinking afterward that he (the sitter) *must* have placed the slates on the table himself!

It will be seen from the above that there is a great difference between what *actually* transpired, at any given séance, and what the accounts *say* transpired. The general public cannot get that all-important fact too strongly rooted in its mind: that the events which transpired at a séance may not be reported accurately, so that the report of the séance may be altogether wrong and erroneous, though the sitters, and those who drew up the report, may have been thoroughly honest in their belief that the report is accurate in every respect. The effect of all this is very great indeed. Many spiritualistic séances are quite inexplicable *as described*, but the description is not a true report of what took place at the séance in question. The facts are distorted. Consequently, the person taking it upon himself to explain what took place at the séance is called upon to explain a number of things which, in reality, never took place at all. We must remember, in this connection, that a number of conjuring tricks, *as described*, would be quite impossible to explain by any process of trickery. The description of the trick was not correct.

Let me make this still clearer, and at the same time illus-

trate the difference between what apparently occurs, and what actually happens, by the following example. A conjurer places a coin (say a quarter) in each hand, and closes his hands. Another quarter is now placed upon the fingers of each hand, so that there is now one quarter in each hand and one quarter on the fingers of each. The magician announces that, by simply opening and closing his hands, — which are held at some distance from each other, — he will thereby transfer one of the coins from one hand to the other, so that there will be three coins in one of the hands, and only one left in the other.

Now, if the sitter were writing out an account of what happened, it would most certainly read as follows:

"The magician then tried the experiment, — of opening and closing his hands rapidly, and causing the coin to be transferred, as promised, — but failed in the attempt, the coins from the back of each hand falling on to the table in rather a clumsy manner. They were, however, again placed upon the backs of the magician's hands; the movement was repeated, and this time successfully. The coins disappeared from the backs of both hands, in one of which was now found three of the coins, while the other hand contained only one."

Such is precisely the description of the trick, as it would be given by the average person, on seeing it, and it would represent his honest opinion of what occurred; as it stands, it is quite inexplicable by trickery. Needless to say, the account is *not* a true statement of what actually occurred, as the following explanation will make clear.

The first time the coins were dropped on to the table, the movement was not so "clumsy" as might have been supposed. It was, in fact, intentional, being the principal factor in the accomplishment of the trick. What *actually* transpired at that time was this. The magician, by a quick movement, dropped both coins from *one* hand on to the table, at the same time dexterously opening the other hand a trifle, and allowing the second coin, on that hand, to fall into the interior of the hand itself. Thus, while both hands are still seen to be closed, one is empty, and the other contains two

coins. It is obvious, therefore, that, when a coin is placed upon each of the hands again, the magician has only to repeat the opening and closing movement, and there will be three coins in one of the hands, and only one in the other.

This trick illustrates, in a very simple and striking manner, the possibility of reporting a fact in an entirely erroneous manner, quite unconscious of the fact that this error in reporting has been committed. Just in this same manner, are many slate-writing and other phenomena misreported, and hence an explanation of the séance, *as reported*, rendered impossible. The trouble is that the " report " does not *really* report what actually occurred.

Thus, to revert to the famous Davey-Hodgson séances, mentioned on pp. 87-90, it must be borne in mind that many of the effects there witnessed would be absolutely inexplicable by trickery, provided the accounts were accurate. Yet we know that these slate-writing séances were the result of fraud throughout. " Writing between the conjurer's own slates, in a way quite inexplicable to the conjurer; writing upon slates locked and carefully guarded by witnesses; writing upon slates held by the witnesses firmly against the under surface of the table; writing upon slates held by the witnesses above the table; answers to questions written secretly in locked slates; correct quotations appearing upon guarded slates from books chosen by the witnesses at random, and sometimes mentally, the books not touched by the medium; writing in different colors mentally chosen by the witnesses, covering the whole side of one of their own slates; messages in languages unknown to the medium, including a message in German, for which only a mental request had been made, and a letter in Japanese, in a double slate locked and sealed by the witness; the date of a coin placed by the witness in a sealed envelope correctly written in a locked slate upon the table, the envelope remaining intact; a word written between slates screwed together and also corded and sealed together, the word being chosen by the witness, after the slates were fastened by himself, etc. And yet, though 'autographic' fragments of pencil were 'heard' weav-

ing mysterious messages between and under and over slates, and fragments of chalk were seen moving about under a tumbler placed above the table in full view, none of the sitters witnessed that best phenomenon, — *Mr. Davey writing.*"

Doctor Hodgson pointed out four factors that were operative in vitiating practically all reports of slate-writing phenomena, these faults being found in practically all the reports examined. They were omission, substitution, transposition, and interpolation. He says:[1]

"Suppose that we are considering the testimony of the witness to his own separate and complete examination of a slate immediately previous to the apparent production of writing. Then, according to what I have been saying, we have, with a perfectly *bona-fide* witness, four possibilities to consider, besides the one that his impression is correct. It may actually be that no examination at all was made by the witness (interpolation); it may be that, although made, the examination was not made in the perfect manner now described (substitution); it may be that the examination, although faultless and made at the sitting, was not made on the occasion alleged (transposition); or it may be that, although the examination was made as described, and on the occasion alleged, events, perhaps unnoticed or regarded by the witness as insignificant, intervened between the examination and the apparent production of the writing (omission)."

Many of my readers may feel somewhat insulted at this accusation that they cannot detect such obvious trickery when it exists, and that they are liable to make such mistakes in recording a séance as those here mentioned. They may comfort themselves with the thought, however, that it is no disgrace to make mistakes and errors of this kind; for, as Professor Jastrow pointed out:[2]

"The matter is in some aspects as much a technical acquisition as in the diagnosticating of a disease. It is not at all to the discredit of any one's powers of observation or

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 388-9.
[2] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 148.

intellectual acumen to be deceived by the performances of a conjurer; and the same holds true of the professional part of mediumistic phenomena. Until this homely but salutary truth is impressed with all its importance upon all intending investigators, there is little hope of bringing about a proper attitude toward these and kindred phenomena."

It must be remembered that the observer, at a spiritualistic séance, is not in a normal state of mind, but is in a condition of more or less suppressed excitement, induced by the conditions of the séance itself. It is only natural that it should be so. There is a certain mysterious atmosphere about a séance — and particularly a dark séance — calculated to disturb the nerves of the most hardened. The darkness, the intense expectancy that something will happen, we cannot say what, the quiet, the playing upon the emotions — it is all calculated to take the sitter out of his workaday world into another, and, to just that extent, render him an uncritical judge of what transpires, and incapable of detecting what fraud the medium may be disposed to offer in the name of spiritualism. Needless to say, therefore, this attitude of mind makes it easy for the medium to entrap his sitters, and to impose upon their credulity to a far greater extent than would be the case were they in possession of their full critical faculties. To just that extent, therefore, the medium has an advantage over the conjurer, since, in the latter case, the spectators already *know* that the effects they see are merely the result of fraud, and come prepared to detect the trick. In the case of the medium, on the other hand, the sitters are not assured that the effects they see are the results of trickery; they may be the results of some genuine supernormal power. The very possibility of the fact that it "may be" the latter puts them off their guard, to a certain degree, and so renders the task of the medium so much the lighter.[1] Just as the observer, of old, was awed by beholding some phenomenon, produced in the presence of the necromancer, so is the modern

[1] "A medium of experience can always outwit a looker-on, even more than a conjurer, because a conjurer would not be allowed to play the antics which we can." — *Confessions of a Medium*, p. 139.

investigator similarly awed by the production of phenomena produced in the presence of a medium.

An example of the effect of this mental attitude is found in the following passage, which is an account of a materializing séance, and what took place there. "We cannot doubt that many a spiritualist has found his convictions confirmed at some séance by displays of the most paltry impostures, who would, had he attended the séance under the assurance that he was about to witness a conjuring performance, have detected the *modus operandi* instantly. I may give an instance which came under my own observation. At a materialization séance given by Firman, at which I was present, a supposed 'spirit form' appeared, draped in a semi-transparent flowing robe, so transparent, in fact, that Firman's bare arm was visible behind it, waving it to and fro. When the figure retired to the cabinet, the door was closed upon a portion of the robe. The door opened again slightly, and the end of the robe was drawn into the cabinet. Most of the sitters perceived this clearly, but one, a 'believer,' averred conscientiously that the fabric was not withdrawn, and that he saw it slowly melt away." [1]

If these defects are to be found in the individual observer, they are to be found more strongly developed in a crowd, as such, whose opinion is always worth far less than the opinion of each individual in that crowd. G. Le Bon showed this very clearly, in his remarkable work, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind.* Here he says:

"A crowd, perpetually hovering on the borderland of unconsciousness, readily yielding to all suggestions, having all the violence of feeling peculiar to beings who cannot appeal to the influence of reason, deprived of all critical faculty, cannot be otherwise than excessively credulous. The improbable does not exist for a crowd, and it is necessary to bear this circumstance well in mind to understand the facility with which are created and propagated the most improbable legends and stories. . . . It is not necessary that a crowd should be numerous for the faculty of seeing what is taking

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 389-90.

place before its eyes to be destroyed, and for the real facts to be replaced by hallucinations unrelated to them. As soon as a few individuals are gathered together they constitute a crowd, and, though they should be distinguished men of learning, they assume all the characteristics of crowds with regards to matters outside their specialty. The faculty of observation and the critical spirit possessed by each of them individually at once disappears. . . . In the collective mind the intellectual aptitude of the individuals, and in consequence their individuality, are weakened. . . . The characteristics of the reasoning of crowds are the association of dissimilar things possessing a merely apparent connection between each other, and the immediate generalization of particular cases." See also, in this connection, the chapter on " The Atmosphere of Assemblies," on pp. 48-9 of *Psychic Studies,* by Franklin Johnson.

These remarks will make it clear to us why many men of science have been deceived by very simple tricks and fraudulent devices, while investigating spiritualistic phenomena — their scientific culture is no guarantee that they are any more capable of detecting fraud than is the man-in-the-street, — in fact their training has made them very much *less* capable of detecting fraud than the average person, who comes more in contact with the world, and is an acuter judge of character and human nature. Unless the other qualifications of a man of science entitle his judgment to especial respect in this particular field, therefore, we should not give it any greater weight than the opinions of any other investigator, merely because he is a scientific man. As Mr. Podmore pointed out, " . . . men of general culture and even men of science are not specially qualified to detect conjuring tricks. . . . It is pertinent to point out that conjurers, even eminent conjurers, have themselves admitted the genuineness of some of these suspected manifestations." [1]

I have insisted that the account of a spiritualistic séance is generally valueless for the reason that lapse of memory renders the after-account defective, just as malobservation

[1] *Modern Spiritualism,* Vol. II., p. 204.

renders the memory picture of the events erroneous. It may be replied to this that the accounts of many séances are not open to this double objection, for the reason that the after-account was written from notes made at the time. I would reply to this that these " notes " have been made in very few instances, so few, indeed, as to be entirely omitted from consideration, when taking into account the whole history of the subject. But, even in these few cases, where notes *were* taken, it is impossible to take notes of this character, while the phenomena are in progress, and have them accurately represent what is transpiring. Either the note-taker must take very brief and ineffectual notes of the phenomena in progress, which would be of very little assistance to him in drawing up a detailed report of the séance, or the notes may be full, and in that case, the note-taker must, necessarily, have missed observing some of the phenomena, or some of the movements of the medium in producing the phenomena, while taking the notes; and, in that case, too, the notes are of little assistance in telling us what actually transpired at a given séance. Professor Hyslop found what a difficult task it was, — this attempting to take notes at a spiritualistic séance, — and says:[1]

" . . . I went prepared to take notes, which I did. But I came to the conclusion that I could take but a very small part of the notes necessary to give a clear and full account of such performances. I moreover concluded also that five minutes after the performance of any trick my memory was not good enough to recall important facts which would be necessary to tell the story rightly and fully to one who had not observed it. But the most important conclusion was that many things took place which I could not observe at all, as the sequel showed to be true." How widely the accounts of a trained and an untrained observer may differ, when describing the same event, may be seen by comparing the descriptions of Sir William Crookes and Miss Florence Marryat, *e. g.*, of a certain materialization. Crookes's account is to be found in his *Researches;* Miss Marryat's in her book, *There*

[1] *Borderland of Psychical Research,* p. 226.

Is No Death. The accounts are compared in *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. XII., p. 268.

In addition to all the above methods of deception, there are, of course, numerous others which the professional medium employs in order to deceive his sitter. It would take too long for me to enumerate all these here, but I must mention one or two others that are in frequent use, for the reason that they are of more or less general application. The first is that the medium often assumes a certain ignorance of events and languages, etc., so that when these events are given through "the spirits," at a séance, they will have the appearance of being supernormally imparted information. Many mediums, again, have a smattering of several languages, but will state, on being asked, that they know only English. The reason for their doing this is that, when messages are written on the slate, *e. g.*, the sitter is all the more dumbfounded, for the reason that he now has *two* "miracles" to explain, instead of only one — the writing on the slates and the content of the message. The author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium* asserts (p. 14) that this is very frequently done by mediums.

If the sitters, at any given séance, are more than usually acute and watchful, the medium is sure to notice this, and, in all probability, the result will be a "blank séance," no phenomena at all being forthcoming. The medium always goes on the principle that it is far better to have a blank séance than an exposure, and in this he is, of course, quite right. An exposure is irredeemable, while a blank séance may be attributed to bad conditions, indisposition, lack of power, and what not. Mr. Davey wrote, in this connection: "If the performer has any reason to think that any part of his trick will be seen, he can take refuge in a blank séance; nor would it generally be the case that if the trick were partly performed the observance of strict conditions by the sitter would result not merely in failure, but in exposure. . . . I have several times had to deal with this danger, and have always been successful." The author of *The Confessions of a Medium* stated that "it does good to have an occasional

failure" (p. 89), while we know that, in the case of Eglinton, at any rate, the séance was continued, in spite of an "exhaustion of power" (so the medium stated), and the spirits induced to continue the phenomena by means of a double fee! "The medium yielded without hesitation, and 'the spirits' continued to give excellent manifestations." [1]

It would be a thankless task to continue this chapter further. The interested reader will find the subject of the psychology of deception ably handled by Professor Norman Triplett in *The American Journal of Psychology*, XI., No. 4, July, 1900, in an article entitled "The Psychology of Conjuring Deceptions." The whole subject is there treated in a very full and exhaustive manner.[2] My object, in the present chapter, is to show that the medium employs very much the same devices and artifices in his production of mediumistic phenomena, and to elucidate the problems: why persons, otherwise acute and intelligent, should be so easily deceived by such simple tricks and illusions. I trust the reasons for this deception are now made a trifle more clear, and that the reader will feel that, after all, he may have been deceived by the simplest devices possible. As soon as this possibility is realized, we may expect many more exposés of fraudulent mediums than are now forthcoming.

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., p. 364
[2] See also Sidis: *The Psychology of Suggestion*, etc.

CHAPTER IV

TABLE-TURNING AND TABLE-LIFTING

Probably no phenomena are more intimately connected, in the public mind, with the spiritistic movement than those of table-turning and table-lifting. The reason for this is not, I think, hard to find. There can be no doubt that a large part of the phenomena, at least, are genuine, however we may choose to interpret them. I mean by this that the table does, in very many cases, actually rise from off the floor; and, whether the ultimate explanation be fraud, unconscious muscular action, electricity, spirits, or what not, a large share of the public's attention is inevitably bound to be directed toward phenomena that do actually *occur*, since the vast bulk of these table-turning experiments have been conducted in private home circles, where fraud was practically excluded, to all appearances. Before we proceed further, then, and in order to avoid misunderstanding, I shall briefly describe the phenomena that are observed, and state the explanations that are generally accepted by the scientific world, by way of accounting for the phenomena which it agrees to consider genuine.

A number of persons sit around a table, small or large, as the case may be; in the light or dark, as the case may be. Each member of the circle places his hands gently on the table-top, and leaves them there quietly for a longer or shorter time, as may be necessary, before the phenomena begin. After a time, the table is seen to tremble, quiver, and, generally, it will move about the room, under the sitters' hands, without any one apparently pushing it in the least; in fact, if the sitters are questioned, they will, almost invari-

ably, state that the table is pulling and pushing *them* about the room! In this belief the sitters are, in all probability, perfectly honest. The feeling is exactly as if the table was possessed with an intelligent force of its own, and had gotten beyond the control of the sitters. The *facts* (these phenomena) science no longer doubts. That tables do act in the manner described (apparently, at least), she no longer denies. The sole difficulty lies in the interpretation of the facts; in the *explanation* that is given of the phenomena observed.[1]

It is not within the province of this book to study the historical evidence — this will be found fully discussed by Mr. Podmore, in his *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 1-21. The whole subject is there treated in a very masterly fashion, though one feels that the writer is, perhaps, at times, a little prejudiced.[2] As a typical example of what a table apparently does, at séances of the kind, I quote the following account of a séance (at which he himself was present), contributed by Professor W. F. Barrett to the *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 25-42, the paper being entitled "On Some Phenomena, Commonly Called Spiritualistic, Witnessed by the Author." The account reads, in part, as follows:

". . . Whilst noticing these facts, I observed a frequent uneasy movement of the entire table, and now it sidled about in a most surprising manner. Lifting their hands completely off the table, the sitters placed themselves back in their chairs with their hands folded across their chests; their feet were in full view, and, under these conditions, and in obedience to my request, the table raised the two legs nearest to me completely off the ground, some eight or ten inches, and thus suspended itself for a few moments. Again a similar act was performed on the other side. Next came a very unexpected occurrence. Whilst absolutely free from the contact of every person, the table wiggled itself backward and for-

[1] "The *Phenomena* are genuine. The hypothesis which spiritualists endeavour to build on these phenomena is altogether another thing." — *The Philosophy of Spiritualism*, by F. R. Marvin, M. D., p. 24.

[2] I particularly had in mind Podmore's criticism of M. Gasparin's experiments (*Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 47) when writing this. His conjectures seem to me — in the face of the existing evidence — somewhat unwarranted.

ward, advancing toward the armchair in which I sat, and ultimately completely imprisoning me in my seat. During its progress, it was followed by Mr. L. and Miss I., but they were at no time touching it, and occasionally were so distant that I could perceive a free space all round the table whilst it was still in motion. When thus under my very nose, the table rose repeatedly, and enabled me to be perfectly sure by the evidence of touch that it was off the ground, and, further, that no human being, consciously or unconsciously, had any part in this movement. . . . Suddenly, only the tips of our fingers being on the table, the heavy loo table at which we were sitting made a series of very violent prancing movements (which I could not imitate afterward except by using both hands and all my strength); the blows were so heavy that I hurriedly stopped the performance, fearing for the safety of the gas chandelier in the room below" (pp. 34-5).

Now, in reading over the above account, it will be seen that two facts stand out with special prominence. (1) That the table moved without any contact whatever, at times when none of the sitters' hands were upon the table at all; and (2) that the table appeared to possess a power or force of its own, and even greater, in strength, than that possessed by the sitters. The *first* of these points I shall reserve for consideration later on; for the present I desire to centre our attention upon the other consideration, *viz.*, that the table appeared to possess a force independent of, and even exercised in opposition to, the conscious intentions of the sitters through whose agency the table moved at all. Further, this force appeared to be equal to, or even greater than, any muscular force that the sitters could themselves exercise.[1]

It was only natural, when these phenomena first appeared, and when so little was known of subconscious muscular action and the power of suggestion, that the readiest explanation should have been the one accepted, and that "spirits" should have been given the credit for such phenomena, especially as spiritualism was just then coming into

[1] See Dodd's *Spirit Manifestations.*

prominence, and other phenomena of a like nature were attributed to their agency. *Some* force was at work, that was certain; and that force was frequently an intelligent force; of that fact there was no doubt either. The spiritistic explanation was the one that would most naturally be adopted by all persons who had no *a priori* objections to spirit, as such. As the scientific world *had* such objections, they began to search elsewhere for a cause, and were not long in finding one that *partially* explained the facts observed, at any rate, and without recourse to spirits, or even to anything supernormal whatsoever.

The first step toward a scientific explanation of the observed phenomena was taken by Professor Faraday, who invented a little instrument which would register the unconscious muscular actions of any person placing his or her hands upon it. By means of this little instrument, Professor Faraday was enabled to show that all persons exercised a more or less powerful "push and pull" action, they being quite unconscious of such muscular exertion; and Professor Jastrow further conclusively proved, in a careful series of experiments conducted some years ago, that not only is this action present and operative in all normal individuals, but that this push and pull corresponded invariably with the expectation of the sitter, who had his hands on the board.[1] Unless the evidence in the case renders this hypothesis untenable, therefore, we must always assume that unconscious muscular action is the true and sufficient explanation of the phenomena of table-tipping, of ouija and planchette writing, and all kindred phenomena.

Of course, such muscular action is not by any means always unconscious. It may be perfectly conscious — intentional fraud. That this has been practised very frequently, in such cases, cannot be doubted. Thus, Truesdell tells us, *e. g.*, that he detected one medium in the act of tipping a table by observing the unnaturally white appearance of the medium's finger-nails, "the unmistakable evidence that she was bearing heavily on the opposite side of the table."[2] But

[1] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, pp. 307-36. [2] *Bottom Facts*, p 37.

I wish it to be understood that this muscular pressure, while it *may* be conscious and fraudulent in many cases, is not *necessarily* so, and, when the evidence in the case, or the moral character of the medium, renders this assumption impossible or repulsive, it should not be urged, as *un*conscious muscular action will perform precisely the same marvels, without the knowledge of the medium, and this is the explanation that should be adopted. As will presently be shown, the real problem only begins when this is assumed and granted!

There is a great deal of evidence that goes to show that this unconscious muscular force is frequently stronger and more powerful than the individual could consciously control or summon. (Perhaps the fact that the vital functions of the body are under the control of the "unconscious mind" may be the explanation of this fact?) At all events, we know that in moments of extreme fear or excitement, when the conscious mind is largely in abeyance, many acts are performed which would be quite impossible to the normal individual, being beyond his normal muscular ability. Carpenter gives an example of very much the same thing in his *Mesmerism, Spiritualism*, etc. (p. 128), stating that, "Braid (in my presence) enabled a man so remarkable for the poverty of his *physique*, that he had not for many years ventured to lift a weight of twenty pounds, to take up a weight of twenty-eight pounds upon his little finger, and swing it around his head, with the greatest apparent ease. Neither Mr. Braid nor his son, both of them powerful men, could do anything like this; and I could not myself lift the same weight on my little finger to more than half my own height. Trickery in this case was obviously impossible, since, if the subject had been trained to such feats, the effect of such training would have become visible in his muscular development."

Additional and very convincing evidence is afforded by a careful study of the phenomena of "dowsing," *i. e.*, the movements of a forked twig or branch, in the hands of a "dowser," when he walks over underground water, metals, etc. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that there is "nothing in it" beyond the movement of the twig, which is

undoubted. Let us further assume that this movement of the twig is due to the unconscious muscular action on the part of the dowser.[1]

The interesting point is this: that the rod frequently manifests a tremendous force, quite beyond the will or control of the dowser, and frequently in direct opposition to his will and belief. I quote a few cases by way of illustration. On pp. 278-9, *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Professor Barrett gives a number of cases (mentioned in his previous report, in Vol. XIII.), of which the following are samples. Mr. Enys, F. G. S., who is an amateur dowser, states "the rod broke off short in front of my hands, and did so a second time in the same place." Miss Grantham (daughter of Judge Grantham), describing what occurred with the Rev. J. Blunt, another amateur dowser, states: "So strong was the impulse, that we found unless Mr. B. relaxed his hold, the twig broke off near his fingers." Lady Milbanke, also an amateur dowser, had the same experience (p. 42). Similar cases could be quoted *ad libitum*. The point is that none of these persons, in the normal state, could consciously produce these phenomena, by any muscular action on their part, and we have no evidence that any of them were in an *ab*normal condition when the experiments were progressing. They could not voluntarily and consciously bend the twig in this manner, and produce the phenomena observed. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the body can unconsciously exercise a far greater amount of energy than the conscious mind can control; as Professor Barrett says, "in hypnosis, somnambulism, hysteria, etc., subjects can perform muscular feats impossible to them in their normal, self-conscious state" (p. 278, Vol. XV.). If this fact be granted, the mystery of

[1] This is, in fact, the theory held by Professor Barrett, who contributed to the *Proceedings S. P. R.* two lengthy reports on the subject, in Vol. XIII., pp. 2-282, and Vol. XV., pp. 130-383, respectively, — though the evidence conclusively proved to his mind that the faculty of dowsing really existed, being, probably, somewhat akin to clairvoyance in its character or essence. That, however, is in answer to the question, How did the knowledge of when to (unconsciously) bend the twig enter the dowser's mind? As before stated, the *actual movement* he considered due to unconscious muscular action.

table-tipping, ouija and planchette, vanish, whenever contact is allowed, *i. e.*, whenever the sitters are allowed to place their hands on the table, ever so lightly.[1]

Having now (I hope) established the fact that the movements of a table, however violent and however much beyond the control of the sitter, may be due solely to unconscious muscular action, whenever contact is permitted, we pass to consider another aspect of the problem.

The fact that the table moves so frequently in direct opposition to the will and expectation of the sitter or medium would seem, at first sight, to disprove the arguments (above referred to) of Jastrow and others, *viz.*, that the table or object always moves in the direction in which the sitter's attention is focussed: in short, in the direction in which it is expected to move. But, rightly considered, the facts do not prove this, as can be readily shown.

That part of the mind which moves the table, in these experiments, is the subconscious, the "subliminal consciousness," or at least one stratum of that consciousness. Now, it has often been proved that the thoughts uppermost in the conscious mind are not by any means those uppermost in the subconscious mind — far from it. The two minds[2] may be running in entirely opposite or different grooves. Consequently, the conscious mind may be expecting one thing — that the table will move to the right, let us say; and, at the same time the subconscious mind may be expecting the very opposite — that the table will move to the left! The

[1] In this connection, I would refer the reader to the very interesting account of the Japanese "possessions," given by Mr. Percival Lowell, in his *Occult Japan*. He states that, in all cases of possession, a wand is used, called the *Gohei*, held in the right hand, which is supposed to act as a kind of intermediary between the man and the god. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the rod is always moved *first* before the worshipper is consciously affected, and that the wand soon becomes uncontrollable (like the divining rod), until it appears "as if the wand shook the man, not the man it" (p. 6). This is like the tail wagging the dog!

[2] Two minds. I have used this expression *pro tem.* for convenience — not because I accept the Hudsonian "two mind" theory in principle. In writing this book, I have had to assume that a large portion of my readers are unfamiliar with the theories held on these subjects, and have chosen forcible language purposely, even though the finer psychological distinctions are sacrificed thereby.

table, of course, moves to the left, in accordance with the law; but, since the conscious mind did not direct the movement, it is apparently in direct contradiction to the law, whereas it is, in reality, in direct accordance with it. I am unaware that this aspect of the problem has ever been worked out in detail before.

Thus far Science is willing to go, but no further! She is willing to admit that certain phenomena occur, which are comprehended within the above outlined theory. But when she is confronted with phenomena requiring an explanation, such, *e. g.*, as the levitation of a table without any contact whatever, she refuses to consider them, calmly asserting that they are impossible, and consequently do not occur at all! This is hardly the scientific attitude in which to approach the subject, it is true; but it is the one adopted by most scientific men, nevertheless. They explain all they can of the phenomena, and the remainder they assert do not exist. The position of the scientific world is summed up, perhaps, by Professor Binet, when he says:

"As for the table-turners, it has long been demonstrated and that, too, by the most exact researches, that they turn simply from the impelling influence of the hands." [1]

All this is very good and very logical, so far as it goes; the trouble is that it does not go far enough. Granting all the above to be correct, it can readily be shown, as I stated before, that the real problem has only just begun. The scientific explanation does not take into account, or attempt to explain, any cases where the table has been raised off the ground *without* contact, and there are very many instances on record, one case being quoted above. How are such phenomena to be explained? It is useless to deny them, merely, as that does not satisfy any fair-minded man. Doctor Carpenter attempted this method, and was mercilessly flayed alive, so to speak, by Andrew Lang, in his *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, pp. 319-21. (See also his *Historical Mysteries*, pp. 185-8.)

But it will be obvious that the great unexplained problem

[1] *Alterations of Personality*, p. 327.

still remains. To the scientifically minded psychical researcher, the puzzling question is, not what moves the table, but does the table give any information unknown to the sitters? The interesting problem is not a physical but a psychological one, so far as the proof of spiritualism goes, that is. Many spiritualists are quite willing to admit that the movements of the table can all be accounted for by unconscious muscular action, but the question is, does the table (by raps, tilts, etc.) impart any information which was not in the minds of the sitters, at the time of the experiments? If so, then it is obvious that the explanations at present in vogue do not explain, but that we must search further, if we are to account rationally for the phenomena observed.

These remarks apply equally to all automatic phenomena; to ouija and planchette writing, to regular automatic writing, etc., as well as to table-tipping. Many persons have an idea that the phenomena are "explained" if once it is shown that the planchette or ouija board, or the table, is moved by the unconscious muscular action on the part of the medium. But it is evident to any one who thoroughly understands the problem, that the difficulties only *begin* when all this is granted. Granting that the board is pushed, or the table tipped, etc., by unconscious (or conscious) muscular action on the part of the medium, the real question at issue then arises, *viz.*, is the imparted information within the knowledge of any of the sitters, or must it have been obtained in some supernormal manner? That is the real question to be solved.

It was necessary for me to go into this detail, when considering the phenomena of table-tipping, as these automatic phenomena are much misunderstood by the public, and I have chosen the phenomena of table-tipping to illustrate a general principle, applicable alike to all automatic phenomena. When once the real problem in the case is adequately understood by the public, much of the hard feelings and misunderstandings of the past will disappear.

It will thus be evident that there are two distinct problems for us to consider, apart from the phenomena which science

admits as genuine. (1) The alleged movements of objects without contact; and (2) the evidence of knowledge possessed by "the table," unknown to the sitters, and apparently supernormally acquired. I cannot stop to consider either of these questions in this place, however, but will return to them later on. On pp. 358-71, and pp. 410-14, respectively, they will be found discussed at some length. In the present chapter I shall accordingly dismiss that part of our inquiry and turn to a consideration of the various methods in which a table can be made to tilt, and even to be entirely levitated from off the floor, by fraudulent means. The measures that have been adopted to obtain this result, — the means employed in fraudulently producing the phenomena, — I shall now discuss in detail.

Let us suppose a number of persons seated around a table. The table rises up, first on one side and then on the other, until, finally, all four legs are off the floor at the same time. Occasionally, though not always, the sitters' hands are now removed, and the table is seen to be suspended in space, without visible support. How are these results accomplished? By very simple devices, in the majority of cases; the actual means employed depending on the circumstances of the case. The principal methods employed are the following:

If the séance is held in the dark, or in semi-darkness, of course the medium's task is easy enough. If he is working alone, without confederates, he has only to press heavily on his side of the table, in order to cause an upward tilt on the side opposite to him, or, he may place his feet under one or both of the table-legs, and, by elevating *his* legs, and at the same time steadying the table with his hands, he can cause the table to be "levitated" in a very remarkable manner. By merely pushing the table about in various ways, an endless variety of phenomena can be produced. By raising the knees, the table can be levitated in much the same manner, the table being steadied by the hands. If the medium has a confederate, they work in pairs, the confederate being placed at a point diametrically opposite the medium, so that

the table is directly between them. The knees may then be employed with tremendous effect. Another method that could be employed in a dark séance is for the confederate to lift up his side of the table with one knee, while the medium raises his side by placing his head under the table, and lifting it up with his neck and shoulders. His hands can be left on the table, during this manœuvre, and held by members of the circle on either side. This, when well executed, is a very convincing "levitation." Of course medium and confederate can reverse the rôles, if desired.

All the above methods are primitive, however, and would hardly be employed by any professional medium, as being too obvious. The majority of mediums who profess to tip tables employ more or less apparatus, the principal methods employed being the following:

Suppose a small, light table is to be levitated. This the medium does by placing his hands upon the top of it. The table is now seen to follow the hands of the medium, and may be lifted off the floor and swung about at will, adhering to the medium's hands throughout. On removing his hands, they and the table can at once be examined, but no sticky material or other device is found to explain the mystery. The secret is this. The medium wears a ring on one of his fingers, a plain, gold band. In one side of this ring has been cut a slit, extending about half-way across it. When the medium's hands are first shown, this section is slipped around to the back of the hand, but at all other times the slit side is turned inward, toward the palm. In the centre of the table is driven an extra stout pin, having a wide head, and all the medium has to do, in order to successfully "levitate" the table, is to slip the niche in his ring under the pin-head, on the table, and, on lifting up his hand, it will be found that the table adheres to it closely, and that the hand may be moved or waved about in almost any direction, without the table becoming detached. When the table is again placed on the floor, the medium presses upward strongly with his hands, thereby extracting the pin from the table, which may then be examined. A twist of the ring on the medium's

finger, and his hands may be examined also, the pin having been dropped on to the floor or elsewhere in the interval. This is a method much employed, and always with good effect.

There is a variation of the above method sometimes employed, in which the pin is dispensed with. In its place the medium employs a little rubber "sucker," to the centre of which is firmly attached a short, broad-headed pin. The medium slips the niche in his ring under the head of the pin, as in the last instance, and the suction of the moistened rubber cup will lift the table off the floor. This method is the one that is sometimes employed in "levitating" a bowl of water.

When a large table is to be levitated, the medium generally employs an assistant. Both he and his confederate wear, strapped to their wrists, under the shirt-cuffs, a stout leather band, to which is bolted an iron rod, extending beyond the leather cuff about an inch. When they take their places at the table, both medium and confederate slip the projecting portion of the iron rod under the table, and, as the hand rests on the top of the same, it will be seen that a vice-like grip can be obtained in this manner, and practically anything done with the table, so far as tilting and levitation are concerned, without any fear of detection; an examination of the feet of all present may be allowed when the manifestations are at their height. Sometimes the table may be levitated without the use of this piece of apparatus, the linen cuffs of the medium and his confederate answering every requirement.

Another method is for the medium and his assistant to have cords or leather straps passed around their necks, to one portion of which is attached a sharp hook. Of course the strap is worn under the clothing. The hook is normally suspended just above the bottom of the waistcoat, but when the medium bends forward, this hook falls below the waistcoat, and may be hooked to the under side of the table. By merely straightening or standing up, the medium and his assistant

can now cause the table to be "levitated" in a very fine manner![1]

There is a conjuring trick known as the "floating hat." The effect of the trick is this: the performer borrows a hat, and, placing his fingers (the tips only) lightly on the crown of the hat, it is seen to adhere to them, and the hand may be moved in any direction, the hat following them, apparently drawn by some force of attraction. The secret is this: the performer has a loop of black silk thread, about three feet long, passed over his head, and hanging down in front. The performer has only to secretly introduce the borrowed hat *into* this loop, and press the hat *against* it, and he can move the hat in any direction he sees fit. Some such device might doubtless be employed in the case of tables, a loop of blackened catgut, *e. g.*, being used for the purpose.

If the medium has full swing of the séance-room, he can cause a table to rise and float in the air without touching it at all. This is done by stretching two black threads across the room, these passing under the table. The threads are in the hands of assistants, who have only to raise the threads in their hands in order to "levitate" the table. The medium may freely pass his hands over and under the table, during the levitation, thus showing that it is not suspended by any normal means!

[1] In *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. X., p. 23, Sir Oliver Lodge made the remark that he would rather trust to his own powers of observation, in an experiment of this kind, than any number of printed records, backed up by any number of photographs. In this he was, I think, very wise. On p. 113 of *Around the World with a Magician and a Juggler* will be found a photograph of a table levitated by fraudulent means — it is impossible to see how.

CHAPTER V

RAPS

Inasmuch as raps were the first phenomena ever observed in the history of modern spiritualism (being the first phenomena produced through the agency of the first mediums, the Fox sisters), their consideration becomes of great importance to us, if only from this, historic, standpoint. At this late date it is impossible to say whether the raps obtained through the Fox sisters were genuine or not. In many respects, it would appear from the evidence that the raps were *at first* genuine. As we shall see later on that the evidence for genuine raps occurring in the presence of certain individuals is practically overwhelming, and inasmuch, also, as this fact of the occurrence of raps is not, when rightly considered, such an extraordinary phenomenon, I do not believe that we shall go far wrong in thinking that the raps observed in the presence of the Fox sisters were at first genuine. If raps have ever occurred at all, I can see no reason for believing that the raps, in this instance, were fraudulently produced.

Be that as it may, however, we have positive evidence that the raps observed in their presence when they became professional mediums *were* fraudulently produced. This evidence will be found in full in a book by R. B. Davenport, entitled *The Death Blow to Spiritualism*. In this work will be found a lengthy historical and critical résumé of the phenomena observed in the presence of these mediums, which I cannot now even attempt to summarize. Here we find a summary of the famous report on the two mediums by the " Buf-

falo Doctors," — Drs. Austin Flint, Chas. A. Lee, and C. B. Coventry. Their report is inconclusive, it is true, since fraud was not directly *proved;* but, inasmuch as the rappings took place only where fraud was possible, and altogether ceased as soon as strict test-conditions were imposed, the phenomena obviously prove nothing. An investigation by several Harvard professors was also inconclusive in results (p. 147). It must also be remembered that the investigations of the Seybert Commission were entirely unsatisfactory.[1] But the real evidence of fraud was supplied by the mediums themselves, both of them furnishing a written statement to the effect that the rappings observed in their presence were due to fraud (*v.* pp. 25-38, and 53-9), and stating that the raps were produced by the joints of the toes and feet (p. 38).[2] But, as before stated, the evidence counts for nothing, from a scientific standpoint, and must be altogether left out of account. Whether raps occur or not is a question that can be settled to-day, without referring back to the case of the Fox sisters, which has no evidential value whatever. My object, for the moment, is not to consider the historical cases, and their evidential value, but to consider the raps themselves, and the methods that can be, and are, employed in fraudulently reproducing them. To this aspect of the problem I accordingly turn.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that, in cases where the raps are obtained on the medium's own table, etc., the table should be subjected to a thorough examination, since there are tables made, called "rapping-tables," which contain a hidden mechanism for producing raps, this being under the control of the medium.[3] So skilfully are these contrivances concealed, however, that it is practically useless to attempt to find them without taking the table to pieces, and a far

[1] See *Report of the Seybert Commission,* pp. 32-48.

[2] It is only fair to these mediums to state that one — if not both — recanted their "confessions" before dying (See *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. III., p. 360 ; Vol. IV., pp. 15-16). The statements of mediums of this character evidently cannot be relied upon — unless *proof* of the statements made be forthcoming.

[3] A full description of the construction of one of these tables, with illustrations, etc., will be found on p. 101 of Hopkins's *Magic, Stage Illusions,* etc.

simpler method would be for the sitter to request raps on other articles of furniture — chairs, walls, etc. Even here we can have no guarantee that the chair is not a " rapping-chair," and that confederates of the medium are not busy knocking on the floor, ceiling, and walls of the room, which has, in fact, often been done. Raps in the *home* of the professional medium can, in fact, be obtained in so many different ways that they are of no evidential value whatever, and I accordingly pass to a consideration of the methods employed by the medium to obtain raps in the sitter's own home, where mechanism or preparation may be considered out of the question, generally speaking.

One very simple method of obtaining raps is the following. The medium places his boot-heel against the table-leg, pressing firmly. By gradually slipping the heel along the table or chair leg, a sharp " rap " will be the result. The medium must exercise a certain amount of care to ensure his foot slipping only the right distance, for otherwise *several* successive raps would be produced, more than the medium wished for, in fact! This degree of pressure cannot be explained, but it can be very easily *felt* by any one making the experiment for himself, and generally is acquired very easily. The rap is located by the medium as occurring on the *top* of the table, and is consequently heard there by the sitter! This inability to locate sound correctly is a peculiar fact which I have discussed at some length on p. 101, in the chapter on " Slate-writing," and consequently shall not repeat the arguments here.

Another method of producing raps is for the medium to slightly moisten his fingers, and press them firmly on the table-top. Now, by simply sliding his fingers very gently and slightly over the table, distinct raps are produced, of a very convincing character. The same method of precaution is necessary here that applied in the last case.

Still another method is for the medium to place his two thumb-nails together, pressing them firmly against the wood of the table. By slightly slipping one nail up or down, a

vibratory impulse is imparted to the table, which exactly reproduces the genuine rap.

A very similar method is that of obtaining raps by a gentle rubbing of clothing or linen, especially the shirt-cuffs. Such raps as these may, of course, be obtained by a medium unconsciously, and in all good faith. Raps, more than any other physical phenomena, perhaps, may be fraudulently produced by a medium without that person being aware of the fact. Leaning more or less heavily on a table (especially if it be of light build) will induce a number of creaks and sounds resembling raps, especially if the medium says that they *are* such!

I have already spoken of the method of obtaining raps by means of the toe or knee joints, the method employed by the Fox sisters.[1]

Again, mediums occasionally employ a little instrument which will produce raps when a button is pressed on the outside of the box in which it is kept. I have known a medium who employed a very ingenious apparatus of this kind, worked by electricity. The battery was in his pocket, and the box was fitted with a clamp which enabled it to be fastened to the under side of the table. Wires connected the two. In a dim light the medium was now enabled to retire some distance from the table, on which intelligent raps would occur, nevertheless.

Mr. D. C. Cook describes a method somewhat similar to the electric device spoken of above.[2] In this case, however, the hammer of the apparatus strikes on the boot-heel, which is made hollow, in order to form a sounding-box. By pressing the heel against the table-leg, very fine raps on its "surface" can be obtained.

The following is a very ingenious method of obtaining raps, for which I am indebted to Mr. Henry Hardin, who published it in *Mahatma*, Vol. II., No. 10, April, 1899.

[1] M. Petrovo-Solovovo succeeded in producing raps in this manner under better test conditions than the Fox sisters. He completely deceived all his sitters (See *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., pp. 120-1). I have been unable to produce these raps myself, though I have repeatedly tried to do so.

[2] *Mahatma*, Vol. IV., No. 10, April, 1901.

"Have a piece of tubing a foot long and about the size of a lead-pencil, fitted with a piston, which, on pulling a black thread attached to the bottom of the tube, will rise out at the top about two-thirds of its length, and, upon releasing the pull on the thread, will sink into the tube again. This piston should be, in reality, a long, heavy and sharp-pointed needle. Now you have a little hammer made of lead, just the shape of the rubber top on your lead-pencil. The bottom of this should be hollowed out and fitted with a small cork. It is evident, now, that this hammer-head may easily be stuck at will on the point of the needle-piston, thus forming a 'rapper.' The piston should be adjusted to the right leg, just below the knee, under the pants, with the sharp end up. It must be placed on the side next the left leg, and the end of the black thread should come out through a small hole in the seam and have a bent black pin attached to it. To get the manifestations, you seat yourself at a table with several friends, all of whom join hands. Before doing this, however, you reach under the table, and hook the bent pin on the left leg of your trousers. Now, if this is the right length, you can, by separating the knees, cause the long needle-piston to force its way up through the pants, and, if you then press the little hammer-head, cork side down, on to the needle-point, you will have a spirit ready, when you move your knees further apart, to rap loudly upon the under side of the table. If your friends wish, at any time, to investigate, you have only to pull off the little hammer-head, unhook the thread from the left knee, and the needle-point will sink down through the surface of your pant leg, and disappear; and you may get up and walk about with impunity while they search for the ghosts."

Another method of producing raps is for the medium to sit close to the table, so that his knee touches the table-leg. Now, by pressing against the leg of the table with the knee, and slipping it up or down very slightly, a variety of raps may be produced. "Professor Manville" states that this method is extensively employed.[1] A very simple method is

[1] *Spiritualistic Phenomena*, etc., p. 9.

for the medium to tap the table-leg with his boot-heel. He locates the sound on the table-top, and his sitters do the same!

There is one further effect I must describe, before leaving this section on the fraudulent production of raps. Some up-to-date spirits have conceived the original idea of communicating by means of the electric telegraph! They employ the Morse or some other system, and the messages are ticked out in the regular manner, the instrument being safely placed in a wooden box, and no human hand being near the key at the time. The séance is conducted in full light, the medium transcribing the message on to paper, as it is ticked out by the instrument. The test is surely ingenious, and it is highly effective.

Now for the explanation of this apparent marvel. It was stated that the instrument was placed in a wooden box, and about this there is no trickery. The lid of the box is hinged, so that, when it is closed, the instrument is entirely shut off, and no human hands can touch the key without opening the box. This is *supposedly* to prevent fraud, but it does, in reality, render it possible, being one of the chief agencies in the production of the ticks! To make this clear, a further explanation is necessary.

The telegraph key is, of course, provided with a tension-screw, enabling the key to be elevated or depressed at will. Before the séance begins, the medium carefully adjusts the key so that it will just touch the lid of the box, and so that, if the lid of the box is "pressed home" from the outside, the key will be depressed sufficiently to cause a click, precisely as if the key were pressed by the fingers. The hinges are so adjusted that the box will just *not* close of its own weight, a slight pressure being required to close the lid tightly. For this reason the key is not pressed down by the weight of the box-lid, and until the medium presses on the lid with his fingers. This he does by allowing only the edge of his *palm* to touch the box-lid, a slight downward pressure being all that is required to force the lid down, and cause the instrument to "click." The sitter's attention is absorbed

in the translation of the message by the medium, and his writing it on paper. The transcription is merely to divert attention.

The only objection to this ingenious piece of apparatus was that a slight contact with the lid of the box in which the instrument is enclosed was necessary. Various mediums consequently set to work, trying to improve upon the old method by obviating this necessity. Finally they succeeded — they devised an instrument through which it is possible to obtain messages *without* any contact with the box-lid at all. This was effected by concealing a powerful electro-magnet in the table-top, the current being closed or broken, as desired, by pressing upon a button concealed on the under side of the table. The medium could press this button with his knee, thus enabling him to display both hands on the table-top, and disposing of the necessity of touching the lid of the box.

CHAPTER VI

SLATE-WRITING TESTS

If we were to read carefully through the historical evidence for the phenomena of slate-writing, we should find it to consist in one long and practically unbroken series of exposés of fraud and trickery, with no real evidence worth mentioning for the genuine manifestations of any supernormal power, nor any indication of any force or agency whatever at work beyond the muscles of the medium.

In short, there is no good evidence, in the whole history of spiritualism, for the occurrence of writing on slates by other means than such as might have been produced fraudulently by the medium; and I have gone carefully through a vast bulk of spiritualistic literature before making this statement. To any one who knows or realizes the innumerable methods that may be employed to trick the sitter, the records that are in print are entirely inconclusive, with hardly a single exception. The actual *methods* that are employed, this book is intended to expose; a very fine résumé of the historical evidence will be found in Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, especially p. 240 (Vol. I.), and pp. 204-22 (Vol. II.). To this discussion I would refer my reader. Also to the *Report* of the Seybert Commission, pp. 6, 8, 11-12, etc.

In the present book, I shall only touch upon the historical evidence available in the case of two of the most famous slate-writing mediums in history, partly as "sample cases," and partly because the evidence is instructive in more senses than one. For, if the two most prominent slate-writing mediums that figure in the history of the subject are shown to be

frauds, it is at least highly probable that the cases of slate-writing occurring in the presence of mediums of lesser note were produced by the same means as they were in the presence of the more famous mediums. I shall, therefore, confine myself to a consideration of the cases of Slade and Eglinton, surely two of the greatest slate-writing mediums in the history of the subject. The evidence in the case of Slade has been discussed on pp. 19-47, and in the present chapter I shall, accordingly, confine myself to the phenomena obtained through Eglinton's mediumship.

Though Eglinton was never caught (I believe), in any case, in the act of fraudulently producing slate-writing "phenomena" (though he was detected in producing fraudulent "materializations"), his whole life-history is, nevertheless, clouded over with suspicions and doubts. In the early days of his career, he collaborated with Mme. Blavatsky in the production of a "phenomenally produced" letter,[1] which, it was afterward ascertained, was fraudulently produced.[2] Many other suspicious circumstances are to be noted in the career of Eglinton, not the least of which is his persistent refusal to meet Mr. Maskelyne, of London, or allow him a sitting.[3] I now turn to the more definite evidence obtained by the S. P. R., a study of which is most interesting.

Typical séances occurring in the presence of this medium will be found recorded in *Proceedings*, Vol. IV., pp. 35-8; *Journal*, Vol. I., pp. 399-400, and elsewhere. The first *systematic* effort to test the alleged powers of this medium, however, was made in 1886, when a very extensive series of sittings was held by members of the S. P. R., principally, the reports of which will be found in *Journal*, Vol. II., pp. 282-334. While these sittings were striking in many respects, they were, in reality, anything but convincing; so much so that Mrs. Sidgwick, in summing up the evidence as a whole, stated that she had "no hesitation in attributing the performances to clever conjuring" (p. 332). This expres-

[1] For an account of this see *Psychic Notes*, Calcutta, p. 60.
[2] See *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. III., pp. 254-6.
[3] *The Supernatural?* p. 196.

sion of opinion naturally brought down upon her head, and indeed upon the S. P. R. in general, a storm of criticism from spiritualists and others who believed in the reality of the phenomena occurring through Eglinton's mediumship. But the phenomena were certainly anything but conclusive in character. Podmore points out several defects in the evidence in his *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 212-3. Further doubt was thrown on the supernormal nature of the phenomena by the publication in the *Journal*, Vol. II., pp. 362-75, of a very fine paper by "Professor Hoffmann," on "How and What to Observe in Relation to Slate-writing Phenomena," and several additional letters by Mrs. Sidgwick. But these sittings were ultimately shown to be entirely devoid of any real evidential value by Doctor Hodgson, who, in a magnificent series of articles, literally tore the *Reports* to pieces, and showed just how fraud might possibly have been practised in every single case.[1] So that, although no *proof* of fraud was obtained, the evidence to scientific and cautious minds, for the supernormal, vanished.

But more definite evidence of fraud was forthcoming. In *Proceedings*, Vol. IV., pp. 338-80, will be found recorded a series of sittings by Prof. Carvill Lewis, in one of which the whole process of trickery was seen through, Professor Lewis practically detecting the entire process by which Eglinton obtained his information and produced the writing on the slates. Prof. Carvill Lewis writes:

"Mr. Eglinton places the book on the table with the open side toward him. His thumb is not visible, his whole hand being under the table. I purposely do not look directly at him, but busy myself with these notes. The moment I begin writing, the manifestations begin. He breathes heavily, sighs, moves, and rattles the slate, puts his right arm far below the table, withdraws his body slightly forward, and then *looks downward intently* in the direction of the slate. I suddenly look up, and immediately he also looks up with a very distressed expression of countenance. I look at my notes and again he looks down intently, and for some time,

[1] See *Journal*, Vol. II., pp. 409-30, 461-7, 489-520.

apparently, at what he is holding beneath the table. From the position of his arm, I judge that by this time he has lowered the slate to perhaps eight inches below the table, even his elbow being sunk out of sight. He now jerks the slate several times, breathing loudly. I look up again, when he says that he is tired, and brings up the book and slate, laying them on the table. . . ." And so on. The whole performance was so obviously conjuring to a skilled observer that the wonder is that it could ever have been thought anything else.

The spiritualists still insisted, however, in spite of the strong evidence to the contrary, that Eglinton's phenomena were genuine, and challenged the skeptical world to bring forward any other person, who, by the aid of trickery, could duplicate Eglinton's séances, under the same conditions as his were given. This was the strong position of the spiritualists at that time: they could always challenge the skeptical world to produce a conjurer who could duplicate the phenomena observed, and, so long as this individual was not forthcoming, there was at least a certain amount of rationality in their belief that the phenomena were genuine. The only way to prove that they were in the wrong was to produce a conjurer who, by unaided trickery, could exactly duplicate the phenomena witnessed in Eglinton's presence.

Realizing that this was the only thing left for them to do, the S. P. R. endeavored to find some one who could, in some measure, duplicate the Eglinton séances by fraud. But mediumistic secrets were closely guarded in those days and the Society had great difficulty in finding any one to undertake the task. They were extremely fortunate, however, in obtaining the services of a young man, S. J. Davey by name, who had come to the conclusion that the slate-writing performances of Eglinton's were all trickery, and had succeeded in duplicating most of his methods by sleight-of-hand means, and adding several new effects of his own. So far from Mr. Davey being an unsympathetic critic at the commencement of his investigations, he was, on the other hand, at first practically convinced of the reality of the phenomena he observed,

and a series of his sittings with Eglinton was recorded on pp. 431-9 of the *Journal*, Vol. II., which was written from the standpoint of a virtual believer. At the time of their publication, however, Mr. Davey had been convinced for some time that they were of no evidential value, and so stated (p. 431). I cite this merely to show that Mr. Davey was not by any means a prejudiced or partial investigator.

As stated, Mr. Davey had succeeded in duplicating the slate-writing performances of Eglinton to such a close degree that he and Doctor Hodgson planned a daring line of attack upon the position of the "believers," which was calculated to silence all opposition. Davey was to give a series of test slate-writing séances free, members of the S. P. R. and others being invited to be present and witness the phenomena *on the condition* that they supplied the Society with a written record of the séance, while Doctor Hodgson was to be present for the purpose of taking notes. The majority of the sitters did not, of course, know that the phenomena were to be produced altogether by trickery. The object was twofold: to illustrate in a practical manner the possibilities of malobservation in séances of this character, and to show the close parallel between these séances and those of Eglinton, — the fraudulent and the supposedly genuine.

The plan worked to perfection. Not only did the sitters fail to find out the trickery in the phenomena produced (and even refuse to believe that it was trickery when they were assured of the fact!) but they unconsciously afforded the world an opportunity of obtaining possession of the most valuable documents that have ever been forthcoming relative to this subject of malobservation, lapse of memory, and the psychology of fraud in general. The documents must be read for any one to realize the extent to which these mis-statements are made in all good faith. In fact, deliberate mis-statements are made of facts that actually took place, and it is frequently asserted that certain things happened which did not take place at all. All these mistakes were such only, and were not due to any *conscious* myth-making on the part of the sitter. They merely illustrate, in a marvellous

degree, the possibilities of fallacy, in observing phenomena of this character, and the extent to which undetected and even unsuspected fraud may be carried. I have discussed this aspect of the problem on pp. 48-63; for the present I wish merely to call attention to the other aspect of this series of sittings; *viz.*, that the phenomena occurring through Eglinton's mediumship were so nearly duplicated that not one of the sitters was enabled to distinguish the phenomena, and to tell which was fraudulent and which genuine.

The net result of all this was to raise the strong presumption that the phenomena observed in Eglinton's presence were fraudulent also, and the Society was enabled to turn about and say, "If there is any difference in these séances, show it to us, for otherwise we are surely entitled to assume that the phenomena occurring in Eglinton's presence are fraudulent also." The last prop of the spiritualists had been effectually knocked away, so far as their defence of the slate-writing phenomena went, for where was the evidence of the genuine? Indeed there was no difference in the manifestations at all; but, with inconceivable inconsistency, the spiritualists placed the cart before the horse in their interpretation of the Davey-Hodgson séances, and insisted that they showed, *not* that Eglinton was a fraud, but that Davey was a medium who would not admit the fact!! Could anything be more irrational? The correspondence in the Society's *Journal*, about this time, waxed fast and furious; the dispute was bitter, and culminated in a challenge to Doctor Hodgson to show, in detail, just *how* the phenomena were produced, if they were nothing but fraud. It must be understood that, in the early reports of these sittings,[1] the actual *methods employed* had not been stated, partly because it was not considered necessary, and partly because Mr. Davey objected (very naturally) to having his methods made public in this manner. So long as Mr. Davey lived, therefore, this revelation was never made, but his death ended the chief objection to the exposé of the methods employed, and Doctor Hodgson accordingly contributed to the *Proceedings S. P. R.* (Vol.

[1] *Journal*, Vol. III., pp. 8-44; *Proceedings*, Vol. IV., pp. 381-495, etc.

VIII., pp. 253-310) a detailed exposition of the methods Mr. Davey employed. It is most interesting reading, and forms a chapter in the history of the psychology of deception hardly less valuable than the original.

This complete exposé was calculated to silence all reasonable opposition, and, though several noted spiritualists *still* continued to believe that both Eglinton and Davey were mediums, the doubt in the minds of the vast majority vanished completely.[1]

I close this brief résumé of the society's work and investigations in slate-writing by stating that the only new cases they have recorded have both been obvious frauds. The

[1] It is curious to note, in this connection, that so acute a critic and thinker as Doctor Maxwell should have entirely missed the point of the Davey-Hodgson series of sittings; *i. e.*, their psychological import. On p. 399 of his *Metapsychical Phenomena* he accuses Doctor Hodgson of too readily jumping at conclusions, and superficiality in reasoning. Here is his charge:

"I wonder how a man of Doctor Hodgson's intelligence could have based his judgment upon such superficial observations as those of the experimenters he cites. Here are men, without doubt honorable and well educated, who hold séances with the object of obtaining direct slate-writing through Mr. Davey. Instead of taking the elementary precaution of never abandoning their slates, they allow the medium to manipulate them, permit him to leave the séance-room for a moment, consent to allow other slates than their own to remain on the table at the same time as those which are used for the experiment, and lastly, when they examine, only examine it on one side. (These were some of the cases of mal-observation observed.) This is not malobservation, it is absence of observation. (See R. Hodgson: 'Mr. Davey's Imitations by Conjuring of Phenomena sometimes attributed to Spirit Agency;' *Proceedings*, VI. [evidently a misprint for VIII.], 253.)"

That is precisely the case! It *was* absence of observation. But the point was this: that this amount of absence of observation was possible, and in fact actually the case, without the sitters knowing or recognizing the fact, and writing their *Reports* in evident belief that they were correct in their main outline, and that they did *not* contain the errors and omissions afterwards pointed out. Where the superficiality comes in it is hard to see. Doctor Hodgson's main object in conducting these experiments was to illustrate the possibilities of malobservation and lapse of memory in such slate-writing performances, and to show, further, the close parallel between the séances of Davey and those of Eglinton. In both of these objects he succeeded perfectly, and I cannot see how Doctor Maxwell's charges are to be sustained for a moment, when the object of the séances is made clear. Admitting that it was "absence of observation" that was observed during these sittings, their object was to show that *just such absence of observation was possible, all unknown to the sitter*. In this Doctor Hodgson succeeded admirably. Still, Doctor Maxwell had a bone to pick with Doctor Hodgson over the Paladino case, and that may have somewhat warped his judgment in the Davey sittings!

method of the one medium (" Palma ") was actually exposed in detail,[1] while the methods of the famous " Bangs Sisters " were also detected and exposed.[2]

I now turn to a consideration of the actual methods employed in producing slate-writing phenomena by fraudulent means. I have divided the methods into five sections, and shall first consider the various

§ 1. *Methods with a Single Slate* (*Prepared*)

One of the commonest methods employed, both by conjurers and mediums, is what is known as the " flap method." In order to perform this experiment we need a specially prepared slate, which is made as follows. First, an ordinary slate is procured, having a rather wider rim of wood than is usually the case. Into this frame is fitted another piece of slate, fitting loosely into it, so that it will fall out easily, if the slate is turned upside down, *i. e.*, if the side containing this flap is turned downwards (*v.* Fig. VII., p. 104). One side of this flap is left blank, while the other is covered with cloth of a dark color, and exactly matching the table-cloth. Now, when the flap is in place, it will be impossible to tell that there is any false flap, so long as it is held there firmly by the fingers, and, of course, no examination be allowed. And, when the flap is lying on the table, *bottom side up*, it will be practically invisible, if the light be not over-abundant and it is more or less quickly covered up with other slates, etc. The slate is prepared by writing on the slate itself (not the flap) and then covering this writing with the flap above mentioned. The slate will now present the appearance of being clean on both sides, and may be freely shown, cleaned with a sponge, dried, etc., to show that there is no preparation! At some convenient moment, the flap is dropped on to the table; the

[1] *Journal*, Vol. XI., pp. 8-11.
[2] *Journal*, Vol. X., pp. 5-16. By the Rev. Stanley L. Krebs; *with an Introductory Note* by R. Hodgson.

slate, still being held written-side downward, is put into "position," a piece of slate-pencil slipped underneath, the sound of writing imitated (by one or other of the methods to be hereafter described), and, at the proper moment, the slate is turned over, and lo! the under side of the slate is covered with writing. The slate may now be examined to the heart's content, and nothing suspicious will be discovered. The flap has by that time been disposed of, and everything is secure.

Another method of "working" this slate is to write on the *flap itself*, leaving this on the table, written-side down, until required. The slate itself is now, of course, unprepared, and may be examined, cleaned, etc., by the investigators. The slate is placed for a moment on the table (while the medium breaks off a piece of slate-pencil, let us say), and when it is again lifted up, *the flap is lifted with it.* All that has to be done, now, is to disclose the writing at the proper moment, which will not be until the regular "formula" for writing has been gone through. The slate, in this instance, cannot be examined by the investigators *after* the writing has been produced, and for that reason is, generally speaking, an inferior method to that first described.

There is an ingenious variation of this flap method made as follows. Instead of the slate flap there is a flap made of slate-colored *silk*, fitting tightly over the slate, and kept in place by pellets of wax at each corner. To one corner of this flap is attached a cord. This cord passes up the sleeve, across the back, and down the other sleeve, to the left hand, constituting what is known to conjurers as the "single pull." Both sides of the slate can be freely shown; the slate cleaned and dried, and placed on the table, face downward. The writing can now be produced at any moment required. This is a very effective method indeed, for, by simply holding the slate in the air, and in full view of every one, or by merely waving the slate about, it instantly becomes covered with writing! Moreover, the slate can be *at once* handed for examination, and will be found perfectly devoid of any kind of trickery. The great drawback to this method is that the

slate cannot be examined in the first place, and for that reason would not do for serious investigators, trained to observe carefully, and who would demand "test conditions." But, apart from the fact that the vast bulk of persons who visit slate-writing mediums are *not* careful, scientific investigators, this test can frequently be introduced "impromptu," so to say, as follows. The medium first attempts two or three experiments with *un*prepared slates that *are* examined; after which the medium suddenly picks up one of the slates, apparently at random, cleans and dries it quickly, as though in disgust, shows, in a careless manner, that both surfaces are clean, holds the slate in his hand, imitates the sound of writing, and in due time (after adroitly pulling the flap up his sleeve by straightening the arms), produces the slate covered with writing! It is more than probable that, if the investigators had examined all the *other* slates before the writing was produced, they will say in their reports that *this* one was examined also, especially as this slate was examined directly *after* the writing took place, thus heightening the illusion of having examined the slate both before and after.

Still another method is the following. A slate is shown on both sides and carefully cleaned before the investigators. Nevertheless it instantly becomes covered with writing, which fills the whole side of the slate. In this method the supposed "slate" is no slate at all, but merely a hollow frame, in the two short ends of which are inserted rollers or rods, which revolve freely. Round these rollers is passed an endless band of slate-colored silk, the ends of which are firmly glued together. Where the cloth is joined there is inserted a little stud or button; this catches in the frame of the slate when it reaches one or the other end of it, and prevents it from being pushed round too far. One side of the slate is now covered with writing and laid on the table, written-side down. When it is picked up, the upper side is first cleaned and dried, and, in turning over the slate, to clean the other side, the stud is rapidly pushed to the *other* end of the slate, which will, of course, bring the writing to the side of the slate

just cleaned, and leave the side *to be* cleaned clear of any sign of writing. The message can now be produced whenever desired.

Before describing single trick-slates of other patterns, I shall insert, just here, several methods of using the flap-slate, that do, nevertheless, appear to the uninitiated to be entirely distinct and different "tests." This will serve as an example of how the same trick, in the hands of an expert operator, may assume various forms, apparently, and appear to be separate and distinct tricks. The following will serve as an example.

The medium requests his sitter to write a question on a sheet of paper, fold it, and put it into his pocket. A slate is then shown blank, and thoroughly cleaned on both sides. The medium then takes the pellet of paper with the question on it, places it under the slate, the sound of writing is heard, and in a few minutes the slate is turned over, and the under side is found to contain a correct and relevant answer to the question written on the paper. This is a very favorite method among mediums, and, in the hands of a cool man, is sure to prove convincing.

It will at once be seen that there are two distinct parts to this test — obtaining a knowledge of the contents of the folded paper, and the writing of the answer thereto on the slate. Owing to the fact that the medium cannot prepare his answer to the question before he knows what that is, it would appear impossible, at first sight, that he should be enabled to use the flap method in this test, as I have said he does. That is the explanation, nevertheless.

The medium first obtains a knowledge of the contents of the sitter's folded-up paper. This he does by any one of the methods enumerated on pp. 276-90, and need not detain us now. Supposing, then, that our medium has gained this information, the question is: how does he contrive to write an answer thereto without the sitter seeing him do so, since the slates are not concealed under the table in this test, but are kept openly in the light? Well, that is where the medium's

cleverness comes in; he *does* contrive to write the answer on the slate, and this is how he does it.

The medium takes a slate-pencil in his hand, saying, "I shall ask the spirits whether they will answer your question at this sitting or not, and shall ask them to write their answer to that question on this slate; we shall then know how to proceed." So saying, the medium takes pencil in hand and writes on one side of the slate, apparently under spirit control, and then on the other side. The message is read, and it says the conditions are very favorable, and, no doubt, there will be most satisfactory results. The medium then shows the slate with both sides covered with writing, the question asked on one side, and the answer thereto on the other. The slate is now thoroughly cleaned on both sides, and placed on the table. The paper containing the question is placed under the slate, together with a bit of slate-pencil. Immediately the sound of writing is heard, and, on turning over the slate, it is found to be covered with writing, forming a reply to the question written on the sheet of paper.

But the reader is still in ignorance of the way in which the reply to the sitter's question came to appear on the slate. It was in this manner. On one side of the flap, above mentioned, the medium writes, beforehand, a part of the message that was apparently written under spirit control, the answer of the spirits to the question as to whether the sitting would be a success or not. This false flap is lying on the table, cloth side up, and hence invisible. What the medium wrote on the *first* side of the *slate*, then, was the correct answer to the sitter's question, and not the first part of his question to the spirits, as the sitter supposes. On turning over the slate to write the answer on the reverse side, the medium slips the false flap into position, and keeps it there by pressing it firmly into place with his fingers. Now when the question and answer are finished, and the medium shows the slate to his sitter, it is obvious that both sides contain nothing but the question and answer the medium wrote openly, and these are now cleaned off, leaving the slate apparently free from writing of every description. But it will

be remembered that the answer to the sitter's question is under the false flap, and, in order to cause this writing to appear, all the medium has to do is to get rid of this false flap, which he can very readily do by letting it fall into his lap, *e. g.* The writing can now be produced whenever desired, and the slate can also be examined, since the flap is no longer in it. This is a very ingenious test, and will serve to illustrate the cleverness of mediums in devising such methods, and how helpless is the average person in the hands of such sharpers!

The following is a very convincing test. The sitter is shown a blank slate, both sides of which are thoroughly cleaned before him. He places his signature on one corner of the slate, which is then placed on the table, *that* side downward. The medium and the sitter then join hands over the slate, showing that the medium does not do the writing. Nevertheless, the slate being turned over, that side is found to be covered with writing. In this case, the medium certainly did not do the writing on the slate *during* the séance, and the flap method seems to be out of the question, since the writing appeared on the *same* side upon which the initials were written, and hence if this side was altogether taken away, the sitter's initials would disappear also, while the flap could not have been on the *other* side of the slate, since the writing appeared on the *same* side of the slate as the initials were inscribed upon. The flap method would thus seem to be out of the question and impossible.

That *was* the method employed, nevertheless! The explanation of the feat lies in the fact that *one corner of the flap is missing*. The message is prepared beforehand by the medium, and covered by the false flap, in the regular way. Care is taken, of course, not to write on that part of the slate which is exposed to view when the flap is in place. If the flap is nicely bevelled, it will be practically invisible at a little distance; but the medium takes care not to let this corner out of his hands for an instant. When the sitter is requested to write his signature on the slate, the medium holds it for him, and indicates, with his finger, the corner in

which the sitter is to place his signature. In reality, he thereby hides the edge of the flap from the sitter, which would be visible at so short a distance. All the medium has to do now is to drop the flap into his lap, place the slate in the centre of the table, and in due time turn it over, when the writing is revealed.

A very wonderful test may be furnished by means of the flap method as follows. A slip of paper and a pencil are handed to one of the investigators, with a request that he write on it a row of four figures. After he has done so, the paper is handed to a second person, who writes a row of four figures likewise, then to a third person, then to a fourth, then to a fifth. The paper is then folded up and given to a sixth person to place in his pocket, the medium never once having seen the paper, or its written contents. While this has been going on the medium has shown a slate, and thoroughly cleaned both sides. The slate is now wrapped in newspaper and given to one of the investigators to hold. All this can be done, if desired, *before* the paper is handed round, thus precluding the idea that the slate is prepared beforehand! There are no confederates required in this experiment. However, no sooner has the gentleman holding the slip of paper added up the five rows of figures and *mentally* noted their total, than the newspaper containing the slate is opened, and on the slate is found a row of figures which is the sum total of the five rows of figures written on the sheet of paper!

The explanation of this apparent marvel is simple enough. The medium has *two* pieces of paper of exactly the same appearance. One of these is left blank, but on the other he writes five rows of figures (any figures), adds them up and notes the total. He now writes *this* total on the slate and covers this side with a false flap, one side of which is, in this case, covered with newspaper. This side is inward, however, thus it outwardly presents the appearance of an ordinary slate. The second piece of paper is now handed to the first investigator, with the request that he write thereon a row of four figures. After he has done so, it is handed to the

second, with like request; then the third, etc., until five persons have each written their row of figures. It does not in the least matter what their figures were, as, in handing this folded slip to the sixth person the medium has *substituted* for it the paper containing *his own* five rows of figures, the total of which he *does* know. The rest of the trick is obvious. At the proper moment the slate is produced and the number written thereon is found to tally with the total, as added up by the investigator. The flap is not noticed, for, in opening the package, the medium is careful to drop the flap *slate side* down, and, in this case, the reverse side is covered with newspaper. The reason the medium asks for as many as four or five rows of figures is that, if only one or two were written down, these could be added up very easily and quickly, and one of the investigators might have done so and noticed that the total was not that which was finally announced. This is obviated where a large number of figures are written down. The medium takes care to hurry this part of the test as much as possible.

Having now detailed the principal methods of using the trick flap-slate, I shall proceed to enumerate the other chief methods of fraudulently producing writing upon a single slate that has been prepared. There are very many methods of producing writing in a simple manner, but I shall enumerate only those most used and best known.

One that is good is the following. Take a small camel's hair brush and dip it in onion juice. With it write on the slate whatever you desire, and when this is dry it is practically invisible, and may even be examined without fear of detection, if the light be not too brilliant. The medium cleans the slate himself, in this case, and is careful to *dab*, only lightly, the onion juice marks on the prepared side of the slate. Further, the handkerchief with which the slate is cleaned is not unprepared, but has been sprinkled over with powdered chalk. This chalk adheres to the onion juice marks, and the result is a written word not unlike a somewhat blurred chalk mark. A variation of this trick, sometimes performed, is this. The slate, having been shown free from writing, is

placed upon an easel. The medium now allows any one in the audience to choose from a plate containing different colored chalks the color he desires. The chalk is powdered, rammed into a pistol, and fired at the slate. A word appears written on the slate more or less legibly.

There is no trick or preparation about the pistol or chalk. But the slate had been written on beforehand with glycerine, and the chalk sticks to this, when fired at the slate. It is a clumsy trick, at best, and more resembles a conjuring trick proper than a finished mediumistic performance!

Here is a much more effective method, and one very largely used by mediums all over the country. A slate is shown and cleaned on both sides with a sponge and water. It can be thoroughly examined by the investigator, who takes the slate into his own hands, and who does not let it out of his hands once after it is cleaned. He may keep the slate in his possession the entire sitting, put the piece of pencil under the slate himself, and hold both the medium's hands while the writing is taking place. It would appear that trickery is out of the question; and yet trickery of the most simple kind is practised, after all! The secret is this. The medium writes whatever he wishes to appear on the slate, before the sitting, *in acid*. The best preparation is made by dissolving a few small pieces of zinc in hydrochloric acid. A camel's hair brush is used in applying it to the slate. When this is dry it will appear exactly like slate-pencil writing. *But when it is wet it becomes invisible.* The method of procedure now becomes plain. The medium takes the slate and thoroughly wets both sides *before any one is allowed to examine it.* If a rag is not then used to dry it, it will take some time to dry, and may be freely examined in the interval. The medium may explain the fact that the slate is handed for examination *wet* by saying that it (the water) "absorbs adverse magnetic influences," or any other such nonsense that he may choose. A piece of slate-pencil is placed beneath the slate, and the medium keeps his sitter entertained by "clairvoyant visions," or whatever he pleases until the slate dries. The trick is then done. Though it may appear absurdly

simple, when thus explained (as indeed it is), the trick is, nevertheless, one of the most effective slate tests I know, when well performed.

A test very similar to that just described is the following. The medium scratches on the slate whatever he wishes with a sharp metal-pointed instrument. When dry, this will look very like slate-pencil writing. When the slate is wet, it will, however, be invisible. All that the medium has to do is to wait until the slate dries, as in the last instance.

It may be well for me to insert here the principal methods that are employed to imitate the *sound* of writing on the slate, for, of course, the sound of writing has very seldom anything to do with the actual *process* of writing, that having been done, as a rule, long before the sound of writing took place at all. (In some few cases, however, the writing is not done until *after* the sound of the writing has ceased, and at a different time altogether.) It must be remembered that the medium is being more closely observed, in all probability, at *this* time than at any other period throughout the experiment, and for that reason he rarely if ever attempts to perform anything at all at that particular period. He has either written the message beforehand, or he waits until the close scrutiny of the investigators is to some extent relaxed, which it probably will be as soon as they think the writing already performed. This being the case, it is obvious that the medium can never be detected in writing on the slate, since the writing is done at another time; at the time when the sound of writing is in progress he is as free from deceit as any one in his circle! This is a most important point to keep in mind.

The simplest method is for the medium to scratch on the under surface of the slate he is holding with his finger-nail. This imitates the sound of writing almost exactly, and is the method all but invariably employed, many mediums knowing of none other. Another way is for the medium to scratch on a duplicate slate, in his lap or elsewhere, with another pencil. Still another method is for the unoccupied hand to rub two

slate-pencils together. This brings me to the very ingenious method proposed by Truesdell, in his *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, pp. 199-200. By the use of this piece of apparatus, the sound of writing may be produced, though *both* hands are visible and resting on the table.

The piece of apparatus consists of a little wedge-shaped wooden clamp, somewhat resembling a large wooden "V," only the base is somewhat flat, instead of coming to a point. This clamp can be crowded on to the projecting flap of wood on the under side of the table, where it will remain until removed by force. This can be placed in position at any convenient moment. To the lower end of this clamp is attached a slate-pencil. The medium then pushes another slate-pencil through two little loops, made from sewing silk, which are on his trousers, near his knee. All that the medium now has to do, in order to produce the sound of writing, is to rub the two pencils together, which can easily be done by a slight movement of the knee, and the illusion is perfect. It is practically impossible to detect the fact that the sound of writing comes from beneath the table, owing to the fact that the ears are so readily deceived in such matters, which has been abundantly proven on many occasions.[1] It is quite impossible for the ear to locate the sound, under the conditions given, especially as the medium constantly calls the attention of the sitters to the slate. I cannot stop to elaborate this point, which is well known and recognized by psychologists. Detection is impossible, if the feat is neatly performed; and the medium has only to remove the clamp, at a convenient moment, to render everything secure. Truesdell states that Slade used this piece of apparatus frequently, a statement I do not at all doubt.

There are doubtless other methods that can easily be devised, and are, in fact, in use. But the above will give the reader a general idea of the sort of thing he is to expect from slate-writing mediums, and will perhaps assist him in unmasking other methods that may be employed.

[1] See *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 109; Sulley, *Illusions;* Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions*, etc.

§ 2. *Methods with a Single Slate (Unprepared)*

In all the slate tests I have so far enumerated, the trick has been performed with a trick-slate, and was possible because of its preparation. The spiritualist may, perhaps, have objected to all my explanations, so far, as being inadequate to cover many slate tests he has himself seen, in which the investigator has brought to the sitting *his own marked* slate, and never let this slate out of his hands for a single minute until writing appeared thereon. I would reply to this that I have not attempted to do so; my object so far has been to explain those methods that are employed by the average professional medium with slates of his own, or with slates that he has had an opportunity of handling, if only for a few moments before the sitting. In the present section I propose to deal with those tests which are given with the sitter's own marked and unprepared slate; where the medium has had (apparently, at least) no opportunity of manipulating the slate before the writing is produced. In many cases, as we shall presently see, it is not necessary.

It must be understood that all this refers only to single slates, and not to double slates that have been tied and sealed by the investigator prior to his visit to the medium. I shall explain, later on, the principal methods that are employed in fraudulently producing writing between locked and sealed slates; and, in such cases, no matter what the *appearances* may be, the slates always *do* leave the investigator's hands, if only for a few seconds, before any writing is produced on the slates. Says Mr. Wm. R. Robinson,[1] "I wish to remark that, if any person tells you he took two slates of his own to a medium, thoroughly well tied and sealed, and that the slates never left his (the skeptic's) hands, and that there was writing obtained upon the interior surface of the slates under those conditions, he was sadly mistaken, and failed to keep track of everything that actually took place at the time of the sitting." And this statement is repeated by all those conjurers and mediums who actually produce the writ-

[1] *Spirit Slate Writing and Kindred Phenomena*, p. 22.

ing and who *know* what *actually* takes place, and not only what *appears* to do so. I quite admit that, in many cases, the interval of time is far too small to allow of any manipulation of the slates by the medium; and that he is watched far too closely to admit of any such open manipulation. But it is not always necessary for the medium to have this time and opportunity, as we shall presently see! On pp. 136-8, I shall explain a method of obtaining writing between the sitter's own locked and thoroughly sealed slates (prepared by him before going to the medium's house) in which the slates do not leave the sitter's hands for more than two or three seconds, and where the medium's eyes never once left those of the sitter, and yet writing was obtained fraudulently between the locked slates even under these conditions! And if this is the case, if writing can be obtained under conditions apparently so perfect, where the illusion is so complete (of never having allowed the slate out of your hands for a single instant), then I must insist upon the fact that human testimony (especially of persons absolutely unacquainted with conjuring devices and the tricks of mediums) is absolutely valueless, so far as slate-writing performances go. There are so many devices, so many methods of fraudulently producing the writing, that the testimony of the average person is of no value whatsoever in these cases. However keen an observer a man may be there are always a dozen different methods of fooling him, and of course any medium who knows his business would never think of producing the writing *twice in the same way*, for the same sitter. He would always change his method at the second sitting for one entirely different, so that, in case his sitter had some idea of how the writing might have been produced in the first case, and goes with the intention of observing what *would be* suspicious movements by the medium (which would be necessary were his theory true, as it may be), he gets an entirely *different* test that baffles him completely, and he goes away more mystified than ever. It is by such means that the most ardent converts are made.

But to return to slate-writing.

The sitter, we will suppose, has brought his own marked slate, and is determined that it will not pass out of his direct observation until writing has been produced upon it, or the experiment has been given up as a failure. He consequently watches narrowly every action of the medium, and is ready to certify that none of any importance or significance escape him. The medium takes the slate, examines it, says it will do, and hands it back to the sitter, who is at liberty to again clean it, should he so desire. A small piece of slate-pencil is then broken off and placed upon the slate. The latter is now placed beneath the table, and held there by the medium and sitter jointly. Each holds his end of the slate with one hand only, the remaining hands being clasped above the table. In this manner neither could let go his end of the slate without the other being at once aware of the fact. Sometimes the slate is held directly under the table and toward the middle, but this is a very clumsy method, and is never seen nowadays. The usual way of holding the slate is for the medium and the sitter to press the slate against the under *corner* of the table, so that the frame of the slate corresponds with the angle of the table, with which it coincides. The slate is thus directly under the corner of the table (*v.* Fig. VIII.). This would be impossible with an ordinary table, because there is a flange under it, which would effectually prevent it, and for this reason we must use the hinged *flap* of a dining-room table, or have one specially built for the purpose. In either case no table-cloth is used, that being altogether dispensed with. Each sitter supports the slate by placing his four fingers under the slate, his thumb being above the table.

Now what apparently happens is this. The slate being held as I have just described, the sound of writing is heard, and, upon the slate being withdrawn, the under or the upper surface of the slate is found to be covered with writing. The slate was undoubtedly blank when the slate was placed beneath the table and the medium was held throughout as described. Nevertheless the writing occurred, and this is how it was done.

The medium had secreted, under the finger-nail of his first

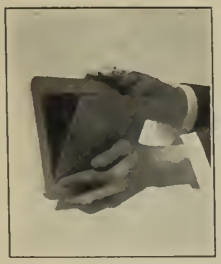


Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

finger, a minute fragment of slate-pencil; and, when the slate was in position, all he had to do was to extend this finger, and to write on the under surface of the slate whatever he desired. This becomes very easy after a little practice. The writing is scrawling, but that makes no difference, the sitters are glad to get it just the same. The message must be short, too, as the radius through which the medium's fingers must pass is limited. The long, even messages are not produced in this way, but in a different manner, to be described presently. Great care must be exercised in order to prevent an undue movement of the tendons of the wrist, the disregarding of which precaution has led to the exposure of more than one medium.[1]

There is one other factor that must be taken into consideration. When producing writing in this manner, it must be remembered that the writing will be *backwards*, so that, when read, it will appear as if written from left to right in the regular manner. This will take some time to learn — more than the mere writing under the table, which can be acquired very easily. The best way to learn to do this neatly and quickly is to stand in front of a large mirror with your slate in your hand and watch your writing in the glass as you go. Far less practice is required to become an expert at this than would be imagined at first sight.

So far, I have mentioned only one method of producing writing on the under side of the slate, that in which writing

[1] See *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., p. 355. Prof. Carvill Lewis is describing a séance with the famous Eglinton. He says: "*I distinctly saw the movement of the central tendon in his wrist*, corresponding to that made by his middle finger in the act of writing. Each movement of the tendon was simultaneously accompanied by the sound of a scratch on the slate." Mr. Truesdell also says (*Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, p. 146): "I could plainly see the movements of the cords in the doctor's (Doctor Slade's) wrists, indicating to me that he was doing the writing, but I was not sure of this fact, at the time, as he appeared to be very nervous, making many strange, and, apparently, unnecessary movements." This method is said to be the one most frequently employed by Doctor Slade, which I consider highly probable, from a study of various accounts of sittings with him. It will be observed that it is not absolutely necessary to hold the slate under the table in order to perform this test — it is quite possible to produce the writing while simply holding the slate in the air, being careful to note that the under surface of the slate is below the eye-level of the sitters.

is produced by means of a piece of slate-pencil, secreted under the finger-nail. But there are other means of producing the writing, which I must now mention. One method is for the medium to have, concealed up his right sleeve, a thimble, to which is firmly attached a small piece of slate-pencil. Getting this into his right hand, the medium slips the thimble over his first finger, and produces the writing as before mentioned. All he has to do to dispose of the apparatus is to let it fly up his right sleeve. This piece of apparatus is ingenious, but always requires a certain amount of manœuvring both to conceal the device and to get rid of it, when once used; and for this reason some clever person hit upon the following idea, whereby the thimble is dispensed with. A tiny piece of very hard slate-pencil is placed at the tip of the right forefinger and over it is placed a piece of flesh-colored court-plaster, this being firmly attached to the finger. The plaster is then carefully blended to the finger with aniline dye, so as to make it indistinguishable. After the plaster has become hard and dry a small hole is made in the court-plaster, allowing the point of the slate-pencil to come through; and this is what does the writing. Of course the finger cannot be examined, in this case, and where an examination is likely the former method had better be employed.

It only remains for me to explain how the writing appeared, apparently, on the *upper* surface of the slate, when it must always have been on the *under* side that the writing took place. The explanation is simply this: in withdrawing the slate at the end of the test (or on some former occasion, when the medium desired to see if "the spirits" had yet written anything), the medium adroitly *turned over* the slate, thus bringing the under surface to the top. When this is not done, then another test had been given, and the writing was on the upper surface of the slate before it was placed beneath the table.

An exceedingly clever test is given by the author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium* (pp. 147-51), as follows:

"Another phase of slate-writing that has puzzled and con-

verted many an investigator was the finger-writing or 'materialization' of a pencil on the finger of the medium. . . ."

(After describing the method of obtaining a knowledge of the contents of paper pellets, as I have done on p. 279, he goes on:)

"After he had read all the pellets, he would come into the room with the sitters and seat himself in the centre of the circle with half a dozen clean slates on the floor at his right and a pitcher of water on his left. Taking one of the slates on his lap and holding it in place with his left hand, he would offer his right hand for examination.

"When all were satisfied that his right hand and fingers were perfectly clean and innocent of any apparatus, he would close all the fingers but the index, and, after swinging it about his head for a few seconds, he would bring the end of his finger down on the slate and proceed to write a message in answer to one of the pellets that had not been answered during the earlier part of the séance. When the message had been completed, he would give to some one of the sitters the small bit of pencil, about the size of a pin-head, that would be found clinging to the end of his finger. They were in great demand, for had not the lucky possessor seen it 'materialized' from the air? Another examination of the hand would be made, and another message written. This would be repeated until all the pellets had been answered, and, when there were those present who were mentioned in his note-books (*v.* p. 314), a few 'tests,' independent of the pellets, would be given.

"This medium had been repeatedly tested by investigators, but his trick was never detected. His fingers had been washed with acids so frequently that the nails were almost eaten off. He converted a great many to a belief in spiritualism.

"His trick was simple enough, the trouble being all with the investigators. They invariably searched in the wrong place for the bits of pencil. There was no use in washing the fingers of his *right* hand, for his pencils were not kept in that hand.

"The pencils were made by pulverizing a slate-pencil and mixing the powder thus obtained with ordinary mucilage, forming a thick paste. This was cut into small squares, about the size of a rice grain. These squares were allowed to dry perfectly hard. He also kept a few of the pencils made by simply breaking small bits off a piece of slate. When he seated himself to give the writings he would deposit about a dozen of the mucilage pencils on his left knee. His pants were black, hence they were not visible; besides, the slate was nearly all the time over the knee. They could not fall off, for he held them a few seconds in his closed hand before sticking them on his knee. This warmed them and made them sticky, so that they stuck where he put them. Four or five of the pencils not made with mucilage he put into his mouth.

"In picking up a slate with his right hand, he stoops over with his left hand on his knee. When he takes up his left hand one of the pencils is sticking to his thumb. He grasps the slate with his left hand, in such a way that the thumb is across the frame on the uppermost side.

"He now offers his right hand for inspection, and, while everybody's attention is attracted to it, he scrapes the piece of pencil off his thumb on the slate. Both the pencil and the slate being black, the pencil is not seen in the dim light. All he needs do, now, is to place the index-finger of the right hand on the pencil and proceed to write. But suppose he drops the pencil and has no opportunity to get another from his knee? He will simply do a little snorting and contorting and drop one from his mouth and go on with the message. The reason he does not put the mucilage pencils in his mouth is because they would melt. The reason he does not use his mouth altogether is because he is too liable to detection. In order to add to the appearances of his act, he would usually drink a gallon of water during the hour and a half that his séance required.

"This man travelled all over the country on the one deception and always had all the money he required. He is now dead, and his phase is being worked by others."

We now come to a test often employed. A card is given by the medium to the skeptic with the request that he (the skeptic) write a question on it. When this is done, the medium takes the card without looking at it, and holds it against his forehead. After a short interval, he hands the card back to the sitter, and on it, in writing, is found the answer to the question. This clever test is performed in the following manner. The medium has concealed about his person a small flesh-colored piece of watch-spring, bent to fit the end of his thumb. One end of this slips under the thumb-nail, and the other is provided with a minute needle-point, which catches in the flesh and holds the wire on securely. To the *outside* curve of this spring is fastened a very small piece of lead-pencil, and this does the writing. The *modus operandi* should now be clear. As soon as the medium receives back the card, he glances at it, notices the question, and decides what he shall answer. The card is now held to the forehead, with the fingers toward the sitter, and the thumb inward, and with the thumb he writes on the card, after the manner of the slate-test explained on p. 105, in which a thimble is used. This, well worked, is highly effective and delusory.

Here is another clever test. The medium cleans a slate and immediately hands it to the sitter, who is at liberty to examine it and place his private mark upon it. The slate is then placed upon the table, and medium and sitter join hands. In a short time the slate is turned over and a spirit message is found on the under side. The secret is this. A message is written on the slate before the séance began, by the medium. The slate is left on the table, written-side down. When the proper time arrives, the medium picks up a sponge, wet *with alcohol*, and dabs out the writing with this. When the slate is *wet*, the writing will now be invisible, but will appear again as plainly as ever as soon as the slate *dries*. All the medium has to do, therefore, is to keep his sitter engaged while the slate is drying.

Mr. William E. Robinson (who was, by the way, one-time assistant to Professor Hermann), in his *Spirit Slate*

Writing and Kindred Phenomena, pp. 43-4, thus describes an extremely ingenious method, which he once saw performed:

"A friend of mine told me of a medium he once went to see, who gave him a most remarkable test. He brought his own slate, and, as he afterward said, there *could* have been no trick about it! The medium took the slate for a moment, and, with a pencil, covered the slate with writing on both sides, just to see, so he said, if it would be good enough for the test. He then cleaned off the slate on both sides, and gave it back to my friend, requesting him to hold it close against his breast, and then in a short time remove it, and when he did so, he was thunderstruck to find writing on it on the side nearest to him. This struck me as a most astonishing proof of spirit-writing. I had a meeting with the medium, who gave me the same test. It seemed strange to me that he should want my slate to write on and wash it off again, for the same reason as he gave my friend, and that was to see 'if it was good enough for the spirits to work with.' I received a message on the slate, after it was washed, and saw that there was none on there after it was cleaned and handed to me. I went home puzzled, and experimented to no avail. I had another sitting with the medium, but he did not give me the same test;[1] so I returned home again and tried to fathom the mystery, and was eventually successful. The trick was mainly in the pencil. It was pointed at both ends. One end was a genuine slate-pencil, the other end was a silver nitrate or caustic pencil. In writing on the slate, he wrote the lines quite a little distance apart with the slate-pencil; in between these lines he wrote with the caustic pencil, the writing of which was invisible. The sponge the slate was cleaned with was dipped in salt-water. That part of the slate containing the writing done with the silver nitrate was just lightly tapped with the sponge, the rest of the slate was thoroughly cleaned. The salt water, when the slate becomes dry, brings out the silver nitrate white, like a slate-pencil mark. I consider this trick as ingenious and clever

[1] See p. 103.

a one as it has been my good fortune to witness, and one that caused me much mental effort to solve."

Should the reader now imagine that he is capable of unmasking any slate trick he might see, here is one for him to solve. The sitter brings his own marked slate, cleans it himself, and lets it thoroughly *dry* before handing it to the medium. The latter now takes the slate with the tips of his fingers, in one hand, and immediately holds it out, away from his body, so that no contact is possible. Yet in a short time the slate is returned to the sitter and writing is found on the back of the slate. How did it get there?

For this test a piece of apparatus is required of which the sitter has no knowledge. It consists of a long, narrow strip of wood on one side of which is glued a series of letters of cork or felt, and raised from the strip about an eighth of an inch. These letters are in reverse, and are well rubbed with chalk. To one end of this piece of apparatus is fastened a cord, this passing up the left sleeve and terminating in a loop, which is fastened to a button. The length of the string is just sufficient to allow the strip of wood to hang down behind a slate held in the same hand. The sponge is washed with water containing alum, this causing the chalk to stick to the slate more readily. When the slate was handed to the medium he held it downward in his left hand, and allowed the strip of wood to slip down behind it, when it was pressed firmly against the surface of the slate, and then pulled up into the sleeve again out of sight. The same idea has been utilized in the case of a blotter, the slate being dried on the pad. The blotter has the writing done on it with chalk, thus doing away with the strip of wood.

Here is another test. A slate is cleaned and marked by the sitter, and, by him, deposited on the floor, under the séance-table. The medium and sitter then join hands. Soon, the sound of writing is heard, and, on picking up the slate, one side of it is found covered with writing. As the acute reader has doubtless guessed, the writing is done, in this case, by the medium's toes. He wears low-cut slippers, which he can easily slip on and off. The sock of his right foot is cut

away, so as to leave the toes bare. To the big toe is fastened a piece of slate-pencil, and it is with this that the writing is done. This feat may sound most difficult, but it can be learned with comparative ease. The medium takes good care that his sitter does not look under the table, during the operation, by drawing him firmly up against the table, and holding him there until the writing is effected. If an effort is made to look under the table, the medium can easily detect it and instantly slip his foot back into his slipper, when nothing suspicious will be found.

A method sometimes adopted in a dark séance is the following. A slate being cleaned, and placed on the table, and both the medium's hands well held, the lights are extinguished. Soon the sound of writing is heard, and, on again lighting the gas, a message is found written on the slate. In this case, the medium had a small piece of slate-pencil secreted in his mouth, and, as soon as the lights were extinguished, the medium half-rose from his chair, bent over the table, and wrote on the slate with the pencil held between his teeth. But a still simpler way of performing this test would be for the medium to effect the release of his hand, after the manner described on p. 188, and do the writing with his disengaged hand. But dark séances are so obviously inconclusive in any test of this kind that it is hardly worth our while considering them further.

Thus far, we have considered but one class or section of tests with a single, unprepared slate; there remains for our review another whole series of tests, which are, probably, even more frequently employed by the professional medium than any I have so far enumerated — I refer to methods of *substitution;* to methods, that is to say, in which the sitter's slate is, at some convenient moment in the séance, *changed* for another, containing written messages, which slate is, perhaps, in turn, resubstituted for the original, at some later period.

One of the simplest methods, which is also very effective, is the following. The medium has a number of slates in his arms — say four. He hands the investigator the top

one to clean. When he has done so, he hands it back to the medium, who hands him another to clean, also from the top of the pile, and in this manner he proceeds until he has cleaned all four slates. The medium then takes two of them, and places them together, and the sitter is at liberty to bind and seal these up as much as he desires. The two slates are placed on the table, in full view, and are not once removed or touched by the medium throughout the rest of the sitting. Nevertheless, writing appears on the inner surface of the slates, though the sitter may have taken them home to open them. This test is performed as follows:

First of all, the medium wrote out the message he wished to appear on one of the slates, and placed this slate beneath several others on his table. The topmost ones of this pile may be used for any other tests desired, the medium being careful to pick up the four *lowest* for this test. Stand by the side of your sitter, and a trifle behind him. Hand him the top slate to clean, then the second, then the third, each time placing the slate he returns you at the bottom of the pile. While the third is being cleaned, however, you slip the fourth slate (now the top one) to the bottom again, and when he returns you the third slate hand him the top one (really the first one over again) to clean. This he does. Now all you have to do is to place the slate containing the writing and one other together, taking care that the written side is inward, and the slates may be bound up together and sealed to your sitter's heart's content. Instead of slipping the top one to the bottom, sometimes another dodge is used. The medium simply turns the three slates over by a twist of the hand. This brings the prepared slate to the bottom and the last slate cleaned to the top. This slate may be damp from the recent cleaning, however, and, if this is the case, the medium sponges over the slate himself — "to save time" — really to disguise the fact that it is still wet from the last cleaning. After it is wet, he thinks that the sitter might prefer to clean it himself, however, and so hands it to him with the remark: "Perhaps it would be more satisfactory for you to clean it yourself, after all!" I have described

this test as performed with *two* slates, and so really falling under "class four," but it can be performed just as easily with a single slate, and for that reason I have included it in this section. The same remark applies to the other tests I am about to enumerate.

The reader may object that he has received writing on slates, every one of which was separately shown to be clean and free from preparation, and in which case the foregoing explanation would not hold good. That is very true, and I shall now proceed to explain the methods that are employed by the medium when this "turn over" trick is, for some reason or other, not possible. One such method is the following:

The medium takes a pile of slates, cleans and dries each slate separately, and shows it blank before placing it on the floor. When all are cleaned, he selects two, apparently at random, puts them face to face, has them tied and sealed, etc.; nevertheless the writing takes place as usual. The explanation is this. The floor of the séance-room is covered with thick carpet. In this carpet, and close to the medium's chair, there is a *slit*, large enough to admit of a slate being slipped underneath and hence out of sight. It is on this slate that the message is written. The other slates, when cleaned, the medium piles on the floor, one of them being directly over the slit in the carpet. On lifting the slates from the floor to the table, the medium takes care to slip the fingers of his right hand through the slit and to withdraw the hidden slate with the others. All being deposited on the table, the medium selects *this* slate, and any other one, places these two together, binds them securely, and the trick is done.

I shall now describe a most ingenious and much-used test which is even more convincing than any of the exchange methods so far enumerated. I shall first describe it as it would appear to the sitter. The medium hands the investigator two single slates devoid of trickery, which may be examined and marked. The sitter then thoroughly cleans both slates, after which he hands them to the medium, who places them together on the *top* of the table. Medium and

sitter then join hands. The sound of writing is soon heard, and, on taking the slates apart, one of them is found to be completely covered with writing. This is one of the most convincing tests I know.

The explanation, which is absurdly simple, is this:

To the under side of the medium's chair are attached four pieces of wood, forming two grooves, such as are used for sliding tills and small drawers. Into the under or bottom groove is slipped a prepared slate, on which is the message to be produced. In operating this system the sitter is given a seat on one side of a small square table, the medium seating himself on the opposite side. When the medium receives back the cleaned slates, one in either hand, he places his hands beneath the table to draw his chair closer, apparently, (and in fact he actually does this), but *really* to exchange the slate he holds in his right hand for the slate under his chair. This he does by sliding the slate into the top groove, and withdrawing the slate in the under groove in the act of bringing the hand up to the table again. This may sound complicated, but, with a little practice, it can all be accomplished with one natural sweep of the hand. The trick is now done, and it only remains for the medium to disclose the writing at the proper time. Female mediums can substitute a pocket in the dress for the two shelves described above.

Spirit pictures are generally produced on slates by this method of substitution. In these cases, the method of procedure is much the same, save that the slate is covered with *faces*, some of which the sitter may recognize as friends or relatives of his. The slate appears to be covered with a white powder, and the faces appear as black lines on this white surface, instead of white lines on the dark slate. If I had not already stated that this test was effected by means of an exchange of slates, I venture to think that my reader would be particularly puzzled to account for these mysterious faces, as many as twenty or thirty of which sometimes appear on a single slate held beneath the table for a few seconds only.

The author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium* (who

can always be depended upon for the "business" side of a trick), thus describes the actual methods employed by mediums in producing these faces:

"Wash your slate clean, and, with a pencil, rub it all over until it is white; then, with the ends of the fingers rub lightly until the powder is evenly spread. Now cut from newspaper or magazine the faces you desire to copy. You must not cut out the face on the lines, but cut out a piece of the paper with the face on it, leaving a margin of about an inch all round. Wet the side of the paper opposite the picture with the tongue, being careful to wet it evenly. Lay the paper on the slate, wet side down. Hold it firmly in place, and, with a round-pointed pencil, trace over all the lines of the face, putting a good pressure on the pencil. Now take off the paper, and, when the slate dries, you will find an exact reproduction or copy of the face on your slate. The picture is made from the powder on the slate adhering to the wet paper wherever your pencil touches, and the surface of the slate shows where the powder is removed, making a black line through the white powder. Proceed as above until you have all the faces you want on the slate; slip it in the slide on the bottom of your chair, and wait for a 'sucker.' The writer knows of one woman who is laying up something for a 'rainy day' on this one deception. She is called the 'picture-medium.'

"It would astonish you, reader, to know what a large number of the faces are recognized as friends and relatives by the people who receive them. The writer knows of at least five people who have recognized Lydia Pinkham's newspaper cut as relatives, after it had been transferred to the medium's slate!" (pp. 145-7).

The following is a very audacious and, at the same time, very effective test, that has been employed on several occasions. A slate is handed for examination and cleaned on both sides by the sitter. The slate is placed on a small table which the medium shows is free from trickery and preparation by taking off the cloth. On the slate being turned over, however, it is found covered with writing, though the medium

has not been near it in the interval. The principal part of the trick is effected by the medium in the act of showing the sitter that there is no deception! When the slate was laid on the table the medium remarked: "To convince you there is no trickery about the table, I will remove the cloth." Suiting the action to the word, he does so, but immediately replaces it, together with the slate. It is in this action, however, that the trick is performed. On the table-top is resting *another* slate, containing the message ultimately received by the sitter. Over this slate is placed the cloth. When the medium picked up the cloth he also picked up with it the under slate, this fact being concealed by the other (examined) slate, which he has just placed upon it. In replacing the cloth, he simply reversed the sides, laying the *first* slate on the table, where it is now covered by the cloth, and the second one is thus brought into view. "It is astonishing," says Mr. Robinson, in commenting upon such tests as this one, "how such barefaced and simple devices will deceive the spectator. It is the boldness and air of conviction of his assertions that carry a medium's test successfully through." [1] Indeed this would appear to be so, when we read that Doctor Slade had the impudence to carry a slate to the door with him (to answer a knock from without, supposedly) and to exchange the slate he carried for another, at that opportunity! [2]

Finally, I must mention two methods of producing writing on a single unprepared slate, which, though cumbersome, have, nevertheless, been employed to good effect. A clean slate is placed in the middle of the table; the light is lowered, and all the sitters place their hands on the slate. The sound of writing is heard, and soon the slate is turned over, and, on the under side, is found a written message. The secret is this. The table has a double top, about a foot deep, and within it is concealed a small boy. The top of the table is fitted with a trap-door, known in conjuring parlance as "a trap," and this the boy can open and do the writing on the

[1] *Spirit Slate Writing*, etc., p. 31.
[2] See Truesdell's *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, p. 147.

under surface of the slate. To conceal the depth of the table a table-cloth is used extending half-way to the floor all the way round.

An improvement on this method is the following. The small boy is done away with, and the top of the table, though still double, is only about six inches deep. In this case, the medium effects the release of his right hand (as described on p. 188), places his hand under the table, opens the trap, and does the writing himself. Or the person holding his right hand may be a confederate, and allow him to take his hand away and replace it at will. Needless to say, the light must be extinguished for this test. The sitters all place their hands on the slate to hold it down, and prevent it from being pushed upward by the writer's pencil, thus disclosing the trick. Needless to say the medium asserts it is to make more certain there is no trickery!

§ 3. *Methods with a Double Slate (Prepared)*

We now pass on to a consideration of those slate tests that are given by the aid of the double or hinged slate. In many ways these tests with double slates are the most wonderful of all, for the reason that the writing is found between locked and sealed slates, which the investigator has often prepared at home, taking considerable time and no end of pains to make sure that the medium could not possibly open the slates and produce the writing therein without detection; and the sitter is determined, moreover, that the slates shall not pass out from under his observation during the entire séance. Under such conditions, it would appear impossible for the medium, not only to open the slates without leaving the slightest signs of his having done so, but to write an answer inside the slates, and all this without the sitter having observed the least suspicious sign or movement on the part of the medium! Indeed, the feat, at first telling, does sound a flat impossibility, and the average spiritist may, perhaps, be forgiven for asserting that such a thing *is* an impossibility, or, at least, may demand specific proof that such a thing

can be accomplished. It shall be my endeavor to present such specific proof in the present volume, and I trust that my exposé will at least have the effect of forcing the spiritist to acknowledge that such things are *possible*.

I shall devote the present section, however, to an enumeration of the various methods of producing writing between the medium's *own* slates (which we may always safely assume to be prepared), leaving for our later consideration those tests that are performed with the *sitter's* double slates; or those that have been secured and sealed by him at home, and that he knows are free from preparation of any kind.

The first double slate I shall describe is one that appears to be two slates simply hinged together on one side, and fastened on the other side by a padlock that passes through holes in the frames of the slates. Apparently nothing could be fairer, since the sitter is at liberty to examine the slates as much as he pleases, provide his own padlock, and even his own hinges, should he so desire! Yet, after this thorough examination and cleaning, writing appears between the slates, that are held but a few moments beneath the table.

The secret is mainly in the construction of the slates. The false flap is used again, but in a somewhat different manner. In this case, the flap is firmly held in position by a spring catch, and in order to release the flap, the end of the framework of this slate must be pulled or slid out about a quarter of an inch. The lower slate is constructed upon similar lines, as the flap must be clamped in place, in the lower slate, as soon as it has fallen into it. The framework of both slates therefore slips out, as I have described. In order to prevent this from slipping out too soon, however, and thus disclosing the secret of the trick, this framework is fastened by a catch, which is connected with a screw in one of the hinges. This screw stands a little higher than the rest, so as to be easily found. The pressing of this screw undoes the catch, allowing the framework of the slate to be removed. The false flap now falls down into the lower slate, where it is clamped securely, and all again made snug. In this test, *both* sides of the slate can be shown covered with writing, one slate and

the side of the flap nearest to it being prepared with the message beforehand. It will readily be seen that this method could be worked by the medium with great facility and quickness, and without the smallest possible chance of detection.

Another pattern of double slate is the following. The wooden frame (small end) of one slate is made to slide out completely; and to this loose end is attached the slate itself, sliding in and out of the other three sides as in a groove. This loose end is also kept in place very much after the method described in the last test. It is evident that the slates can be locked, sealed, etc., as much as desired. All that it is necessary for the medium to do is to release the catch, slide the slate out in its frame, write on the lower slate, as well as on the inside of the sliding slate (thus producing writing on both sides of the slate when opened), slide the slate back into place, when it will be caught and securely held by the spring catch, and the trick is done. If a very *soft* slate-pencil be used, there will be no sound of writing. This is essential in some tests when the writing is not produced at the time supposed; but, in this particular instance, it does not in the least matter, since "the spirits" are supposedly writing on the slates, in any case. While manipulating the slates (if his sitter wishes to hold one end of them under the table), the medium simply rests *his* end on his knees, and proceeds to use his disengaged hand as I have described.

In the following test the flap is again used, but in a different manner still. In this test, the slates are not real slate, but are made of cardboard, or a sort of silicate slate stuff. It is, consequently, more or less flexible. In this case, the flap is blank on both sides, and fits snugly into the frame of *either* slate when pressed home with the fingers. One side of this flap and the inner side of one slate are now covered with writing, and the flap pushed home, written side inward, of course. The slate now has the appearance of being perfectly clean, and may be washed with a sponge, and even given a cursory examination. The slates are now placed together, tied up, sealed, etc., but the writing appears as usual.

It only remains for me to explain the manner of the release of the flap. It is this. The medium pressed strongly down in the *middle* of the slate, thus forcing the flap out of its position and into the lower slate. It is then pressed home firmly by the medium into the *lower* slate, before this latter is handed for inspection.

Mr. Robinson gives the following ingenious test in his *Spirit Slate Writing*, etc., pp. 36-7. "Another test, which was supposed to be convincing to skeptics, was one in which a double slate was used; it was hinged and provided with a lock in the wooden frame. The slates were examined, locked, and the key given to the skeptic. The skeptic was allowed to select, from a number of pieces of colored chalk, the color that he desired the message to be written in. Upon the slates being unlocked and opened, the writing is found in the color selected.

"While the slates are being examined, the medium seizes a duplicate key which fits the lock. This key has a thimble attached to it which fits the performer's right thumb; also attached lengthwise to the key are several small colored pencils or crayons of different lengths. When the slate has been examined, it is placed under the top of the table, and held in position by the thumb of the right hand, which is underneath, and the fingers above the table. During this manipulation, the thimble is placed on the thumb, and the performer, with the key attached to it, opens the slate, using his knee to assist or support the slate. One part of the slate opens downward, and rests on the knee, which holds it in position, *i. e.*, at an incline, pressing it against the table-top. On this part of the slate the writing is now done with the colored crayon selected, which (colors) are usually red, blue, green, and white. When the color of the crayon is selected, the performer turns the thimble round, bringing that color upward. Although not easy to execute, it is, nevertheless, a most surprising and effective test.

"The above test was used by a medium very successfully for years in England and France, and was only found out recently."

Here is a clever test performed with a half-dozen slates. After they have all been examined and cleaned by the sitter, the medium places two of the slates together, and, after holding them in this manner for some time, they are separated, but no writing is found! The spirits have failed! But never mind, perhaps "the conditions are not good enough," or "we have not given the spirits time enough," as the medium suggests. The two slates are again placed together, accordingly, and medium and sitter again hold them over the table. Again they are separated, but still no writing is found! As if in despair, the medium picks up *another* slate, shows both sides, and places it against the one the sitter has in his hand. Now the two slates are separated (after a brief period), and one of them is found covered with writing.

In this test, we again have recourse to the false flap so frequently mentioned. The slate containing the flap is among the others on the table. The first two slates given to the sitter are all right, and on these no writing occurs. On receiving these slates back, the medium substitutes the flap-slate for one of those handed him, and holds this slate *beneath* the other, flap side *down*, the flap being still in place. On separating the slates, again no writing is found. The medium now takes up a third (unprepared) slate, and shows both sides of it to the sitter. Meanwhile he has, however, dropped the flap into his lap, leaving the right-hand slate free from trickery, and with the written side down. This right-hand slate he now places *over* the slate he has just picked up, thus bringing the written surface inside, and between the two slates. I myself have utilized this test very frequently, and can vouch for its complete effectiveness.

There is another style of locked slate made which I shall not stop to describe in detail. It is sold by all conjuring depôts, and I need only state here that the hinges are "faked," the slate opening on this side, and being kept fastened, ordinarily, by a spring catch, as before described. It is really a variation of those mentioned on p. 119.

Another form of the double slate is known as the "box-

slate." This is on the same principle as the last mentioned, except that, in this case, the frames of the slates project some distance, forming a kind of box. There are hinges on one side of this box, and the other side is fastened with a lock and key, like any other box. The trick consists in the fact that the staple, which is "doctored," is capable of being either removed or held firmly in place by a sliding bolt, as the case may require. The author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium* states (p. 131) that he has had a slate of this character for years and that "it has passed scores of critical examinations at the hands of scientific and other investigators, and came through them all with its secret undiscovered." So much for the value of examination of trick-slates!

A clever variation is sometimes effected as follows. A question is written on a sheet of paper, and this the sitter places in his pocket. A blank piece of paper, which may be examined, is then placed between the slates, and these latter are now held together over the centre of the table. In a short time the slates are opened and an answer to the sitter's question is found written *on the piece of paper* between the slates. In this case the flap-slate is again used. The medium obtains a knowledge of the sitter's question after the manner described on p. 279, and, while the sitter is cleaning some slates, the medium writes his answer and slips the paper thus prepared between the surface of one slate and the false flap. This slate is now picked up, with one other the sitter has just cleaned, and a *duplicate* piece of paper is openly placed between the slates. The medium now adroitly turns over both slates, when the flap will fall into the lower slate, concealing the blank piece of paper, and bringing to light the one containing the answer to the sitter's question. The rest is obvious.

When, however, the paper is *marked*, and substitution is impossible, another dodge is resorted to. The false flap is done away with, and the medium writes his answer on a piece of paper in sympathetic ink, which becomes visible through heat. The requisite heat is supplied as follows. The top of

the medium's table is hollow, and in it is placed a spirit (alcohol) lamp. The surface of the table consists in a sheet of iron, to which is fastened, at the corners, a tightly fitting cloth. When the lamp is lighted, naturally the metal becomes hot, and this is communicated to the slate. This method, well worked, is highly effective.

Here is another method of obtaining writing between locked and sealed slates. The slate is, in this case, a trick-slate, and is made as follows. One of the slates is made to hinge or pivot in its frame; *i. e.*, the frame itself remains sealed, but the slate portion hinges out. This slate is placed over a trap in the medium's table, and, at the proper moment, the slate is released by a spring catch. The slate then falls down into the interior of the table, and the medium, placing his hand within the table, is enabled to perform the writing with the greatest ease. All he has to do, now, is to close the trap and the table, and the trick is done.

A very elaborate and ingenious method of obtaining writing on a specially prepared slate, by means of electricity, I shall not now stop to consider. The explanation may be found in Mr. Hopkins's *Twentieth Century Magic*, pp. 135-143.

As a final method of using the flap-slate, I shall give the following test. A book of poems is handed to one of the investigators with the request that he insert, anywhere between its pages, a paper knife, in order to mark the place. This is done. A slate is then shown blank and cleaned. The person holding the book is now requested to open it and read the first verse on each page. Immediately this is done, the slates are opened, and the verses just read are found copied between the slates. "There!" you will say, "Your silicate flap or acid writing will not work in this case, for the writing is done *after* the book is opened and read, and *this* is done only after the slates are fastened together."

The writing *was* done through the flap method, just the same! How did the medium know where the book would be opened? He did not care where it was opened, as the book

was especially made for him, and *every page was exactly alike*, with the exception of the number!

It is possible, however, to do this trick with an ordinary book that is unprepared, and I shall now describe a trick I have frequently performed with an ordinary dictionary which is examined before the writing takes place. I shall first of all, however, describe this test as it appears to the investigator, and afterward its *modus operandi*, as, in this manner, the reader may form a clear idea of the tremendous difference that exists, in reality, between what *actually* takes place and what *appears* to happen.

The performer comes forward, and hands for examination an ordinary dictionary. It is minutely inspected by the audience, and found free from trickery in every way. While this is being examined, the performer shows an ordinary slate, both sides of which he thoroughly cleans with a wet sponge, dries it, places it upon an easel, and covers it with a borrowed pocket-handkerchief. He calls attention to the fact that he does this *before* he commences his trick. Ten slips of paper are now handed to ten members of the audience, with the request that they write on these slips any number from one to five hundred. This being done, the slips are folded up, collected, and placed in a glass goblet, on the table, in full view of all. Ten more slips are now given out to ten other persons in the audience, with the request that any number between one and fifty be written on these slips. While these slips of paper are being folded and collected, the performer borrows a gentleman's hat, and, upon the slips being handed to him, he immediately drops the ten slips into the hat, shaking them well up also, and has one, any one, of audience is now allowed to select any one of the ten slips he pleases, and retain it, without opening the paper. The other nine slips are thrown away. The performer now takes the first lot of ten slips from the goblet, and drops them into the hat, shaking them well up also, and has one, any one, of these chosen. The remaining nine are again thrown away, and the hat returned to its owner. The performer now turns to the gentleman holding the first slip (on which was written

the number between one and five hundred), and asks him to open his slip and to read aloud the number upon it. This he does, and it proves to be (say) 387. The performer then turns to the gentleman holding the dictionary, and asks him to open it to page 387. He does so. The performer then asks the second gentleman to open *his* slip (the one containing the number between one and fifty), and to tell the audience what it is. He asserts that it is (say) 17. The performer then turns to the gentleman holding the dictionary, and asks him to count down the page (page 387), and note the seventeenth word, but to note it *mentally* (not aloud), and immediately shut up the book. He counts down the column, notes the word, and closes the book. No sooner has he done so, than the performer fires off a revolver, rushes over to the slate, pulls aside the handkerchief, and discloses the word "octopus." On turning to the gentleman holding the dictionary, he admits that this is the seventeenth word on the 387th page!

Nothing could be more mystifying than this trick, well performed. There are no confederates in the audience; everything is genuine, so far as they are concerned; even the slate is handed for a thorough examination as soon as the trick is finished. There is not a second's interval between the shutting of the book and the pulling aside of the handkerchief, which discloses the word "octopus" to the astonished audience. The account I have given is by no means exaggerated, and I do not doubt that many accounts would be far more at variance with the actual facts than is this one. I have given this lengthy account because I think that this kind of object-lesson in maldescription is highly useful, and the only way to make the public appreciate the discrepancies between the account *as given*, and what actually took place.

Now for the explanation. For this experiment, the trick flap-slate is again used. The performer opens the dictionary to any page and decides what word he will use. In this case, it was the word "octopus," this being the seventeenth word on the 387th page. He now writes the word "octo-

pus" on the slate, and covers it with the false flap. The performer has also prepared, before the performance, two *duplicate* sets of papers, one lot of ten all containing the figure 17; and a second lot of ten, on every one of which is written the figures 387. These papers are folded up, secured together by a rubber band, and each placed in a convenient pocket. The first lot of blank papers are now handed round, and, when the sitters have finished writing out their figures, they are folded, collected, and handed to the medium, who, in the act of transferring them to the glass, substitutes his duplicate pack of ten papers. The same performance is gone through in the case of the second bundle of ten; in the act of transferring it from the right hand to the left, it is palmed in the right hand, and the previously concealed package in the left hand brought into view. This can be very easily performed by any expert in conjuring. In order to ensure that these packages shall resemble his own as closely as possible, the performer has, before the entertainment, folded them all into creases himself; and, when the time comes to refold the slips, nine persons out of every ten will fold them in the same creases again! It is obvious that, no matter what pellet the audience may choose, the result cannot but be the same, and result in the choice of the word previously written on the slate by the performer. This has now only to be uncovered, and the trick is done.

§ 4. *Methods with a Double Slate* (*Unprepared*)

We now come to those "tests" in which writing is obtained between the skeptic's own marked slates, or those that are free from trickery or preparation of any kind. To many persons these tests are the most convincing of all, and rightly so. There can be nothing more mysterious than this fact of obtaining writing between slates that are locked and sealed together, and which were, but a few moments before, devoid of scratch or mark. Naturally, the methods are not so numerous as in the previous cases, since the medium is

limited to one possible method of trickery, opening the slates without detection, and doing the writing himself. At least it would appear so to the average person; and because he assumes this to be a fact, many of these tests appear to him to be utterly beyond the bounds of trickery, and hence genuine! That this reasoning is not in accord with actual fact I shall now attempt to show.

The first method I shall describe is one that may be employed when you have two slates brought to you, the four corners of which are screwed and otherwise fastened together. We will suppose that the skeptic has fastened the two slates together at his home by screwing the corners together by means of four screws, covering the heads of these screws with sealing-wax, to make sure they are not extracted, or otherwise tampered with. Writing appears between the slates thus prepared, nevertheless.

In order to produce writing in the way I am now about to describe, the medium must have time, opportunity, and a certain amount of concealed apparatus, of which the sitter knows nothing. The time factor we may leave out of account. It does not require very much time to produce the writing, and what time is necessary will always be granted by the sitter as one of the necessary "conditions." The opportunity factor is more serious. It may be provided for in two ways: either by turning the lights out and having a dark séance, or by allowing the medium to take the slates with him into another room. Of course this latter move may not be known to the sitter; the medium may even give the slates to a confederate or an assistant to take in for him. If this is possible, the rest is easy. But supposing that the medium is obliged to work alone and has no opportunity of leaving the room; his best move in that case is to insist upon a dark séance. The lights being extinguished, the medium gets under the table altogether, taking the slates with him. He may either work in the dark, or may have a faint pocket-light which he produces and proceeds to work by. If this is the case, the table-cloth is very thick and ab-

solutely opaque, so that no light may permeate through it. In either case, the method of procedure is the same.

The medium produces the concealed apparatus, and gets to work. The apparatus consists of (1) a little wedge-shaped piece of very hard wood or metal, tapering to a fine edge; and (2) a piece of umbrella wire about a foot long. Through the small hole in one end of this wire has been pushed a piece of slate pencil, and this has been glued securely in place. With the wedge, the medium proceeds to force apart the wooden frames of the slates, applying it at a point half-way between the two ends of the long side, where the "give" is greatest. When the wedge is forced partly home, the frames of the slates, on this side, will be separated sufficiently to allow the insertion of the slate-pencil by means of the umbrella wire (*v.* Fig. IX., p. 104). With this, the medium proceeds to write anything he pleases on the slate; when this is done, he has only to withdraw the wire and wedge, and secrete them about his person, and the trick is done. This is a method that is much used, and always to good advantage.

A description of another very ingenious method, worked on altogether other principles, is the following, which I quote from Wm. E. Robinson's *Spirit Slate Writing*, etc., pp. 22-3.

"Suppose two slates, tied together, are brought to the medium. Both he and the stranger sit at a table. The slates are held under the table, the medium grasping one corner and the skeptic the opposite corner, each with one hand, and the disengaged hands clasped together above the table. After awhile the slates are laid on the table, the string untied, the slates taken apart, but no writing is found. The medium states it must have been because there was no slate-pencil between them. So a small piece of pencil is placed between the slates; again they are tied with the cord by the medium, and he again passes them under the table, both persons holding the slates as before. Presently writing is heard, and, upon the skeptic bringing the slates from under the table, and untying the cord himself, he finds one

of the slates covered with writing, although but shortly before they were devoid of even a scratch.

"Here is the explanation. The medium does not pass the slates under the table the first time, but drops them in his lap, with the side on which the string is tied or knotted downward, and really passes a set of his own for the skeptic to hold, he (the medium) supporting his end by pressing against the table with his knee, which leaves his hand disengaged. There is a slate-pencil, called the soapstone pencil, which is softer than the ordinary. This is the one used by the medium. He now covers the face of the slate which is *uppermost* in his lap with writing, doing so very quietly and without any noise. Now, as he brings the slates above the table, he leaves his own in his lap and brings up the skeptic's with the writing side *down*. The slates are untied and taken apart and shown, devoid of writing upon the inside, which, he claims, was caused by not having any slate-pencil inside (*v.* Fig. X., p. 104). The medium now places the pencil upon the slate which was originally the upper one (I.), and covers this with what was originally the bottom slate (II.), which is covered with the writing inside on the back or bottom of (the) slate (*v.* Fig. XI.). This manœuvre brings the slate on top with the writing upon its *inside*. Nothing could be more simple and natural. The slates are again tied together, and, in doing so, the slates are turned over, bringing the slate containing the writing, still on the inside, at the bottom instead of the top, and the string tied or knotted above the top slate. Of course, when again separated, the writing is found on the inside of the lower slate. When the slates are passed under the table the second time, the spectator himself is allowed to do this, and the medium, with one of his finger-nails, while holding his end of the slate, produces a scratching noise on the slate closely resembling the tracing of a pencil. It is not really necessary to pass the slates under the table the second time, but they can be held above it if preferred."

There is a very clever test which is sometimes given with two slates that are *without frames*. In this test, the sitter

writes his question on a piece of paper and this is placed between the two frameless slates, which are then bound firmly together. After a time the slates are taken apart, but no writing is found upon them. The medium looks surprised, examines the slates, and finally resolves to try once again. Both slates are accordingly shown blank, the paper again placed between them, and they are bound as before. In a short while the slates are again separated, and, while there is no writing on the slates themselves, there is a message on the paper on which the question was asked, in what appears to be lead-pencil. This test is performed as follows. When the slates are taken apart the first time, the medium manages to catch sight of the question on the sitter's paper and mentally frames his answer. To his right thumb is attached a small piece of a pencil made of lamp-black and mutton tallow. This is pressed together very hard. With this concealed pencil the medium does the writing on the slate he is holding, somewhat after the manner described on p. 109. He holds the slate in both hands, the four fingers being toward the sitter, and his two thumbs toward himself. With his right thumb, he writes on the slate in reverse, *i. e.*, mirror-writing, this writing being, of course, invisible against the black slate. It may, accordingly, be shown to the sitter in a casual manner, after the writing is on it. Now, when the paper is placed between the slates, and these are pressed firmly together, the writing in reverse is transferred to the paper, appearing on it as writing done in the regular manner. It will now be seen why the slates are frameless. Of course, they may be tied, sealed, etc., to your sitter's heart's content, after the second placing together of the slates; and the medium who knows his business will insist upon this being done.

The following "test" I would especially recommend to the reader as a most interesting psychological study, and as illustrating the extreme audacity of the professional medium. Taken all in all, it appeals to me as one of the cleverest pieces of trickery — one of the most cunningly devised deceptions — I have ever come across.

The effect of this test is as follows. The sitter is requested to write a question on a piece of paper, in pen or pencil, and to fold this paper up small, so that the medium cannot possibly catch a glimpse at its contents. Meanwhile, the medium has been cleaning two slates, which the sitter is at liberty to examine both before and after the cleaning, if he so chooses. The medium now places the paper pellet, which he has just taken from his sitter's hand, against his forehead, and holds it there for some time. He apparently can get no "impressions," however, and asks the sitter to place the paper pellet against *his own* forehead and keep it there for some time, being sure to keep his mind fixed on the question he has written. The medium, meanwhile, sits with closed eyes. He presently picks up one of the slates on the table, and writes, in a slow, hesitating manner, upon it. He states that the "*conditions*" are not good, and that he is not at all sure that he has written the correct answer to the sitter's question. Then he reads aloud what he has written. It is: "Dear Henry: The papers will never be found. Andrew Smith." The sitter states that this message has no particular meaning for him, not being in any way an answer to the question he wrote on the paper pellet. The medium looks worried; says that "the conditions are not good," and proceeds to rub out what he has written on the slate. At the same time, he asks his sitter to open his paper and to make sure that he has written his question distinctly and memorized it correctly. The sitter does so and asserts that he has done this. The medium now suggests that "the spirits might prefer to do their own writing," and so puts the two slates together, and he and the sitter hold them above the table, in full light. They are separated, but still no writing appears on the slates! The medium now suggests that perhaps it might help if the paper pellet were placed between the slates, and this is accordingly done. The slates are securely tied and sealed, and again held in full light by medium and sitter, without the medium touching them in the interval for a moment. Finally, the slates are separated and on the inner surface is found the message:

"Dear George: Your business is sure to succeed beyond your expectations. William Stern." This the sitter acknowledges to be a correct and relevant answer to his question.

Now for the explanation. The medium has, palmed in his right hand, a duplicate paper pellet. When his sitter hands him his pellet he deftly substitutes his own for that of the sitter, and allows his right hand containing the sitter's pellet to drop into his lap, while he holds to his forehead his own duplicate, blank pellet. Meanwhile, he opens and reads the sitter's pellet, holding it with his disengaged right hand — an easy task. He now apparently returns the sitter's pellet, really resubstituting the *real* pellet for the "dummy," so that the sitter really receives back his own pellet, containing his question. If any reader thinks that this substitution, without detection, is impossible, I can only assure them that it is not, and not even difficult.[1] The medium openly picks up one of the slates, now, and writes on it the *correct* answer to his sitter's question. This is, it will be remembered, "Dear George: Your business is sure to succeed beyond your expectations. William Stern." He *tells* the sitter, however, that he is not at all sure that he has written the correct answer to his question, and pretends to read what he has written on the slate, but, in reality, he makes up a reply, and so reads aloud, "Dear Henry: The papers will never be found. Andrew Smith." Naturally, the sitter asserts that this is altogether wrong. The medium looks worried and asks his sitter to open the pellet, and see if the writing is plain, etc. The sitter does so, but, while he is occupied in that act, the medium quietly turns over the slate in his hand, thus bringing to the top the clean surface, and turn-

[1] I know of no one whose opinion I would value more, or who strikes me as more competent to detect ordinary fraud of this sort, than Professor Hyslop. Yet, in describing a séance of this kind, and, probably, feeling quite *sure* that fraud was being practised, he writes: " . . . the important point to remark is the fact that *I neither saw nor felt him exchange the pellets,* and yet I was watching him with all the care I knew how to exercise. . . ." (*Borderland of Psychical Research,* pp. 231-2). If this is the case with Professor Hyslop, whose powers of observation are exceptionally keen, of how much value is the testimony of the average individual, absolutely untrained in scientific observation?

ing the written-upon side to the table. He now pretends to clean off the message he has just written, in reality cleaning only the blank side of the slate. Another blank slate is now placed *over* this one, and, after awhile, separated, but of course no writing is found. The medium then suggests that the paper pellet be placed between the slates, and advances toward his sitter the completely blank slate in his left hand. The sitter places *upon* this slate the pellet of paper, and the medium now covers this slate with the *other*, on the lower surface of which, it must be remembered, is the correct answer to the sitter's question. The slates are now firmly bound together, sealed, etc., and in due time they are separated and the answer is found on the inside of one of the slates. Simple as this test is, when once explained, I can assure my readers that the illusion is perfect, and the effect staggering and convincing.

When public performances, or "test séances," are given, the medium has handed to him a number of locked and sealed slates. On these he is to obtain writing. He takes each pair of slates in turn, holds them between his hands, and finally hands them back to their various owners. On some of these there is no reply, but on some are written correct and pertinent answers to the questions asked. Needless to say the medium would not have obtained answers in any case if his confederates had not been in the audience with slates previously prepared by himself. But public performances of this kind are always the most obvious frauds.

I shall now describe a slate-test in which writing is obtained between examined and marked slates that are so sealed and fastened together that it would be an utter impossibility for the medium to open the slates in the slightest degree. The slates are free from writing or preparation of any kind when they are placed together, and they are fastened by the sitter himself, after a small piece of chalk has been placed between them. Let us suppose the sitter begins by screwing the frames of the slates together in several places, not only at the corners. This, therefore, prevents the medium proceeding as explained on p. 129. But,

further, the skeptic proceeds to cover the heads of these screws with sealing-wax; after which he proceeds to fasten or gum the frames of the slates together all the way round with strips of sticking-plaster, securing these in place and finally sealing the frames together in several different places, placing his signet on the seals. If he choose, he may glue the wooden frames of the slates together, also. The operation has probably occupied many minutes. Medium and sitter now hold the slates beneath the table between them, for the space of, perhaps, a minute. At the end of that time the medium requests his sitter to take away the slates and open them, or to open them there, as the case may be. The sitter does so and is amazed to find a message on the inner surface of one of the slates. It is very badly written, it is true, but the sitter is, rightly enough, glad to get writing of any kind under *such* conditions.

At first sight, such a test would appear absolutely beyond the bounds of any sort of trickery. I have stated that the slates were free from writing, as well as from preparation of any kind, when they were put together by the sitter, and this is strictly the truth. The writing was produced *after* the slates were placed together and sealed up as I have described. But that is an impossibility? Not so, evidently, since the writing is really there! Then it must be genuine! Thus reasons the skeptic, and, indeed, we can hardly blame him for his belief.

The trick, in this case, is worked upon entirely different lines from any test so far described. I have stated that a piece of *chalk* (not slate-pencil) was placed between the slates, and it is chiefly in the chalk that the trick lies. It is not an ordinary piece of chalk, but is made of a compound of powdered chalk, water, glue, and iron filings. These were all blended together and allowed to become dry and hard. This is the piece of "chalk" placed between the sitters' slates.

Now, when the slates are placed under the table, the medium extracts, from his sleeve or elsewhere, a magnet, and with this he traces a series of letters on the under side

of the bottom slate, in "mirror-writing." The iron filings in the mixture will follow the magnet, and the chalk will write on the slate in the regular manner. The medium locates the piece of chalk in the first instance, by tipping the slate at an angle, so that the chalk will run into one corner. He first of all places the magnet in that corner and drags the bit of chalk to the middle of the slate before proceeding to write out the message. The ingenuity of this test will serve, I hope, to show the reader the extreme cunning of the professional medium, and how useless it is for the average individual, quite unacquainted with even the ordinary methods of trickery or the elements of conjuring, to hope to cope with the medium on his own ground, and even to beat at his own game a man who, naturally crafty, has made this particular branch of deception his life-study.

I shall now treat the reader to the method of obtaining messages between two locked and sealed slates to which I referred on p. 103.

I have quoted the passage just as it is given by the author, for to change it would be to destroy its setting, and hence its naïveté and psychological significance. Accordingly I quote the passage *verbatim:*

"No man ever received 'independent slate-writing' between slates fastened together that he did not allow out of his hands a few seconds. Scores of persons will tell you that they *have* received writing under those conditions through the mediumship of the writer; but the writer will tell you how he fooled them, and how you can do so, if you see fit.

"In the first place you will rent a house with a cellar in connection. Cut a trap-door one foot square through the floor between the sills on which the floor is laid. Procure a fur floor-mat with long hair. Cut a square out of the mat and tack it to the floor of the trap-door. Tack the mat fast to the floor, for some one may visit you who will want to raise it up. Explain the presence of the fur by saying it is an absorbent of 'magnetic' forces, through which you produce the writing. Over the rug place a heavy pine table, about four feet square; and over the table a heavy cover that

reaches the floor on all sides. Put your assistant in the cellar with a coal-oil stove, a teakettle of hot water, different colored letter-wax and lead-pencils, a screw-driver, a pair of nippers, a pair of scissors, and an assortment of wire brads. You are now ready for business.

"When your 'sitter' comes in, you will notice his slates (if he brings a pair), and see if they are secured in any way that your man in the cellar cannot duplicate. If they are, you can touch his slates with your finger and say to him that you cannot use his slates on account of the 'magnetism' with which they are saturated! He will know nothing about 'magnetic conditions' and will ask you what he is to do about it.

"You will furnish him a pair of new slates with water and cloths to clean them. You will also furnish him paper to write his questions on, and the screws, wax, paper, and mucilage to secure them with. He will write his question and fasten the slates securely together.[1]

"You now conduct him to your 'séance-room,' and invite inspection of your table and surroundings. After the examination has been made, you will seat the sitter on one side of the table, with his side and arm next it. If he desires to keep hold of the slates, a signal agreed upon between yourself and your assistant will cause the 'spirit' in the cellar to open the trap-door, which opens downward, and to push through the floor and into a position where the sitter can grasp one end of it, a pair of dummy slates. This dummy your assistant will continue to hold until the sitter has taken hold of it after the following performance.

"Your assistant lets you know everything is ready by touching your foot. You now reach and take the sitter's slates and put them below the table, and under it, telling the sitter to put his hand under, from his side, and hold them with you. He puts his hand under, and gets hold of the dummy slates held by your assistant.

"Your assistant holds on until you have stood the slates

[1] It must be remembered that, in the vast majority of cases, the sitter's own slates would be used — *not* those supplied by the medium. — H. C.

on end, leaning against the table-leg, and have got hold of the dummy. He then takes the sitter's slates below, and closes the trap. He proceeds to open them, read the questions, answer them, and refasten the slates.

"You will be entertaining your sitter by twitching and jerking and making clairvoyant and clairaudient guesses for him.

"When your assistant touches your foot, you will know that he is ready to make the exchange again, by which the sitter will get hold of the slates he fastened. When you get the signal, you give a snort and jump that jerks the end of the slates from the sitter's hand. He is now given the end of the slates held by your assistant, and you will allow the assistant to take the dummy. After sitting a moment or two longer, you will tell the sitter to take out his slates and examine them if he chooses. Many times they do not open the slates until they reach their homes. This, reader, is the man who will declare that he furnished the slates and did not allow them out of his hands a minute." [1]

In the case of the test just given, it is not absolutely necessary that you should have a cellar in connection. Some mediums, in fact, perform this test in another manner, and without its use. In these cases, the medium makes use of a table with a drawer. The slates are placed in the drawer, which can now be sealed, etc., by the skeptic. Writing appears on the slates, nevertheless. The back of the drawer is missing, and this opening corresponds to a trap-door cut in the wall of the room. An assistant is in the next room, who reaches his hand through the trap and *into* the drawer, extracting therefrom the slates, and writing between them, as in the last instance. A bureau may also be used in place of the table, if desired.

§ 5. *Miscellaneous Tests*

The principal methods of obtaining writing upon slates by fraudulent means have now been given, and it but remains

[1] *Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, pp. 153-6.

for me to enumerate, in the present section, some tests of a miscellaneous character, in which writing is obtained on paper or other surfaces in an apparently supernormal manner. I do not mean by this that I have, in the preceding four sections, mentioned *all* the methods that could be, and indeed *are*, employed by mediums in obtaining writing by fraudulent means, since that would be almost an impossibility. Indeed, it is highly probable that this book will no sooner have gone to press than I shall think of other methods that I might have included in this volume, but the list is obviously unending. This applies also to rope-tying and other tricks of the kind most employed by mediums; no sooner is one method exposed than the medium sets about devising some new swindle by which he may delude his victim. For this reason no book on this subject can ever hope to be exhaustive; the most that can be done is to enumerate as many methods as possible, and to hope that the methods that *are* enumerated will give to the reader enough idea of the kind of trickery that is practised so that it will be a hard thing to deceive him with any similar devices in the future.

The first test of the kind I shall mention is one in which writing is obtained on a sheet of paper that has been placed in a glass bottle or tube which is afterward hermetically sealed. This reminds us of some of the old historical "tests" that were employed, this particular test being spoken of, by the way, as one of the most convincing possible! The paper is devoid of writing when it is placed in the tube or bottle, and there is no trick about the latter, either, no slit or opening by which the paper inside could be extracted and another substituted. Writing appears on the paper nevertheless, despite the fact that the tube has been hermetically sealed, and has obviously not been opened or tampered with by the medium in the interval.

In this case, a piece of blank paper is placed in a thin glass vial, which is then carefully sealed by the investigator. The medium takes the vial, and places it on his table, in full view of all. Soon, however, it is taken down and handed

to the sitter, who, on opening the bottle, finds the paper covered with writing.

The writing was obtained in the simplest manner possible, *viz.*, by the use of sympathetic ink. The paper is written upon, before the séance opens, with a clean pen, dipped in a highly diluted solution of sulphuric acid. The table is the trick-table, described on p. 124, the alcohol-lamp being alight under it. Under the influence of the heat, the writing comes out black, like ink writing, and this, no matter how careful has been the sealing! In some cases, it is not even necessary to place the vial on the table, the heat of the hands being all that is necessary in order to bring out the writing clearly.

The same effect may be produced by washing out the inside of the bottle with ammonia (the bottle must afterward be kept well corked), and by writing on the paper with a weak solution of copper sulphate. In this case the writing will appear blue. Mr. Robinson has pointed out, in his *Spirit Slate Writing* (p. 11), that if blank cards are written upon with a solution of iron sulphate, and these are inserted into envelopes that have previously been moistened with a solution of nut-galls, the hitherto invisible writing on the cards will be developed and brought into visibility. Another method would be a simple exchange of vials, where this is possible.

A favorite test often employed by Charles H. Foster and other mediums is that of obtaining writing on the arm, which has just been shown bare and free from writing, scratch or mark of any character. There are many ways of producing writing on the arm in this manner, the principal of which I shall mention.

One method is to wet the forearm with salt water, and allow it to become dry. This had better be done just before the séance. Now, at some convenient moment, either when your arm is below the table, or when you are standing behind your sitter in the room, take a sharpened stick from your pocket and write the name required on your arm, pressing heavily. Wait until the red lines have disappeared, when you

can draw up your sleeve and show your arm apparently clean, and free from mark of any character. It may even be examined. When you desire the writing to appear, rub briskly over the spot on the arm that is prepared, and the letters will come out in a dull, blood red. It is best to have the fingers of the hand that does the rubbing slightly moistened.

Another way is to write the name on your arm in glycerine. In this case, the sitter writes his question on a piece of paper, which the medium then burns and rubs the ashes on his arm. The ashes stick to the glycerine marks, causing the writing to appear in black, smudgy handwriting, and the spirits are supposed to have written!

Still another method is to have a long strip of wood, to which are fastened letters cut from felt or cork, *in reverse*. This strip of wood is pushed up the sleeve, and the arm presses upon it heavily, the medium leaning on the table for the purpose. The piece of wood is now secretly abstracted, and hidden, and the medium has only to rub his arm briskly with slightly moistened fingers in order to produce thereon writing in a very good hand.[1]

Several mediums have created quite a sensation by introducing a new test, in which the up-to-date spirit writes, not in long-hand, but on a typewriter! The typewriter is shown, apparently free from preparation, and a message is written on it by the medium to show that it works like any other typewriter. A piece of paper is placed between the rollers, and the medium retires some distance from the machine. The keys are now seen and heard to move of their own accord and write on the paper any message the sitters propose. I myself have witnessed this test, and the effect is certainly most uncanny.

The whole secret consists in the fact that black silk cords

[1] It is conceivable, of course, that such a thing might take place in a genuine manner — writing appearing on the arm in some inexplicable way — by supernormal action. Such cases might be allied to the stigmata observed in the cases of certain saints; the bleeding patches obtained by hypnotic suggestion, etc.; but, until we have evidence for their reality, such speculations are useless.

are attached to the under side of the typewriter keys, and passed under a set of metal bars or pulleys. The threads are carried back to the hand of an assistant behind the scenes, who pulls the threads and so causes the keys to sink, correspondingly, and the writing to progress. A detailed description of the mechanism of this typewriter test will be found in Hopkins's *Twentieth Century Magic*, pp. 63-6.

There has recently come to my notice a simple device or trick by means of which chalk marks may be apparently " precipitated " on the palm of the hand, when held beneath the table, the under side of which may be examined. The performer, in this case, asks his sitter to thoroughly examine the under side of the table, which he does. He, the performer, then shows the palm of his hand free from mark or preparation of any kind, the sleeves being rolled up to the elbow. The performer then places his hand under the table, and, in a few moments, brings it up, showing a distinct chalk mark on the palm of the hand. This is wiped off, and the hand again held under the table, when the same thing happens. This may be repeated two or three times.

The explanation is this: The performer rubs over the nails of his hand with sandpaper, just before the performance, and rubs powdered chalk into the nails thus rendered rough and uneven. Now, by simply closing the finger on to the palm, a distinct impression is left which may be wiped off and reproduced by merely bending over each finger in turn.

CHAPTER VII

ROPE-TYING TESTS

In all rope-tying tests the prime object of the medium is, of course, to free himself in the shortest possible space of time after the lights are turned out, and, at the same time, in a manner which will not betray that fact to any one caring to make an examination of the cords after the "release" is effected. With this in view the medium always endeavors to obtain a certain amount of "slack," as it is called, meaning a certain amount of retained cord which can be let out later on, and allow the cord to slacken up somewhat after the tying is effected. This "slack" is obtained in a great variety of ways, of which I shall enumerate a few of the principal, since it would be impossible to enumerate them all; and, moreover, every medium has a more or less individual method of obtaining this "slack." The following will, however, give a general outline of the methods employed, which must be worked out in detail by each person for himself.

If the hands are tied to the back rung of the chair, sit well forward during this tying, so that, when you wish "slack," all you have to do is to sit back in the chair to obtain all you need. When the wrists have been tied and are being drawn down to the knees, to the chair-legs, or together at the back, one twist of the hand, and the rope is wound round the wrist *twice*, so that, when the time comes for the release, all you have to do is to twist the wrist once round in the *reverse* direction, and again you have all the slack you can possibly use. If you fail to get in the twist, do not let it disconcert you, and result in your being hopelessly

tied. But, if they proceed to tie your hands to your knees, sit up straight, thus compelling them to tie around the fleshy part of your leg. All you have to do to obtain the coveted slack is to lean forward and force your hands toward your knees, where the leg is much smaller, and the slack is yours to command. If they proceed to tie your hands to either the front or back legs of the chair, and you do not have an opportunity to twist on them, without their observing, which sometimes happens, sit very erect and shorten your arms by not allowing them to entirely straighten and by elevating your shoulders as in shrugging, thus making the distance from the point on your wrist, where the rope is tied, to the topmost rung about four inches. It will always be their endeavor to tie below the top rung around the leg. By slipping down in your seat you ought to have all the slack you can possibly make use of. If they are tying behind you, turn the inside edges of your hands together, and when they make the ends fast to the bottom rung, or any point below the hands, sit up straight, drawing the hands up just far enough to avoid it being observed, and there will be plenty of slack. A fundamentally important point to remember in all " rope ties " is that the rope should never be of the soft cottony type, but always stiff, hard, and more or less shiny. This slips very easily, and it will be found almost impossible to tie you with this kind of cord so that you cannot release yourself with a little effort and ingenuity.

A very simple test tie with a piece of tape, braid, or ribbon is the following, which I explained in *The Woman's Home Companion*, for April, 1900 (p. 20). I quote from the description there given.

" One or two gentlemen are now selected from the audience, who volunteer to come up and bind the ' medium's ' hands together. A piece of ribbon is given them for this purpose, about one and one-half inches wide and about one yard long. The medium now holds out one of his hands and allows the committee to securely tie the ribbon around his wrist, fastening it by six or eight stout knots and finish-

ing the operation by securely sealing these with wax. The right hand is now tied in a similar manner, the knots being sealed as before. The medium's two hands are now secure behind him, about a foot apart, and in that condition he takes his seat on the chair. . . ." (Various manifestations then take place which are described. The knots and seals are found intact, at the conclusion of the séance. Here is the explanation.) "The medium naturally wishes to use his right hand, being the more serviceable of the two, and so he offers the *left* hand to be bound first. This is done fairly and squarely, and the knots are sealed. Now, when the right hand comes to be tied up, it will be found that there is only *one end to tie with*, instead of two. Thus, every knot tied in the tape will be a kind of 'hitch' around this single end, and is really a slip-knot, capable of being slipped up and down the piece of tape between the two wrists. If the hands are kept about a foot apart, and the ribbon or tape kept fairly taut during the operation of tying, no difficulty will be experienced in slipping the knots to and fro on the ribbon. This is hard to explain on paper, but will readily be understood when tried. A little care must be exercised when the sealing-wax is being applied. Impress your committee with the fact that they must not drop any of the wax on your wrists, and their desire to avoid this will nearly always cause them to put the lightest possible dab on; also, you must remember that this will probably be *between the knots*, and hence of no consequence to you" (since they are not untied at all).

The medium, if he knows his business, will always insist upon his legs, arms, and body being securely tied, though they may not have to be released at all in order that he may produce the manifestations required. He will, none the less, insist upon this tying being done with equal or even greater care than his hands, etc., since this will serve to distract the attention of the spectators from the real point at issue, and at the same time make the performance appear all the more wonderful to the uncritical observer.

It is not always that the spectators are invited to place a

signet upon the seals of the cord, the knots being simply *sealed* securely. This is the case when the medium finds himself more or less hopelessly bound, and he has serious doubts as to whether he will be enabled to release himself or not. If so, well and good, but if *not*, the medium adopts a very daring and, at the same time, a very ingenious method of getting free. He deliberately *breaks* the seals, works the knots loose, produces the manifestations required, replaces his hands in the loops, draws them tight again, and covers the knot with a portion of the chewing-gum he is chewing, blending it in with the sealing-wax. The gum is specially chosen, being the same color as the sealing-wax.

If the wrists are to be tied together behind the back one method of obtaining the necessary slack is as follows. Have the left wrist tied securely, the two loose ends hanging down. The right wrist is now placed over this and the two ends passed round this wrist, tied, sealed, etc. The secret is that in turning around, to place the hands behind the back, one end of the cord is passed over the middle finger, this fact being concealed by the covering right wrist (*v.* Fig. XII., p. 164). It will readily be seen that all that is required to obtain the necessary slack is to bend down this finger, when the rope is released. It can readily be twisted over the finger again when desired. Mr. Wm. E. Robinson asserts that this was the method employed by the Davenport brothers,[1] but I have great doubts if this was the case.

If there is no sealing, and the cord is not marked, the medium simply cuts the cord, and hides it about his person, bringing forward for examination a *duplicate* cord, which he has had secreted in his clothes from the first. In this case the tying can be as complicated as desired, many minutes being taken in the operation, while less than *one* minute is required to not only effect the release of the medium, but untie every one of the knots! Could a more convincing proof of the power of the spirits be conceived!

There are two very difficult ties in which the hands are tied to the knees of the medium by a series of apparently

[1] See *Spirit Slate Writing and Kindred Phenomena*, p. 88.

solid knots. They are known to mediums as "the double-header" and the "great front twist," respectively. These ties are very complicated, and would be difficult to give here without diagrams and an extended explanation. That I cannot now attempt. They will be found explained in great detail in Mr. Truesdell's *Bottom Facts Concerning the Science of Spiritualism*, pp. 235-7 and 273-5 respectively. A simpler variety of this "twist" will be found explained in *Mahatma*, Vol. V., p. 82, February, 1902.

Another test is the following, which I quote *verbatim*, to enable the reader to appreciate the manner in which mediumistic séances are treated by conjurers. "On a board the size of a table eyelets are carefully arranged at measured distances apart and in such a manner that there are two for each sitter whether lady or gentleman, one for the right hand and one for the left. Beginning at any point in the circle a piece of copper wire is passed around the arm of the first sitter, through the eyelet of the board, around the other wrist, through the other eyelet, and so on to the next sitter. In this manner the wire is threaded through and through, fastening each person to the board, and to the neighbor on either side; in fact, to the entire circle. The company, including the medium, being interlaced, the ends of the wire are tied together, the joint covered first with paper, then with wax, and they are sewed and tied as desired and any seal is set on. Now the lights are extinguished and the usual manifestations take place.

"*Secret:* The medium has on false shirt sleeves, so all he has to do is to slip out his arms as soon as the lights are extinguished, then go through the various manifestations, replace his arms in the sleeves, and call for lights. Now all can be examined and of course is found O. K. Then have some one cut the wire." [1]

For an extremely clever test I am indebted to Mr. Henry Ridley Evans's *Hours with the Ghosts*, from which I quote the following:

"The spirit necktie is one of the best things in the whole

[1] *Tricks in Magic*, etc. By J. H. Burlingame, Vol. I., p. 34.

range of mediumistic marvels, and has never to my knowledge been exposed. A rope is tied about the medium's neck with the knots at the back, and the ends are drawn through two holes in one side of the cabinet, and tied in a bow-knot on the outside. The holes in the cabinet must be on a level with the medium's neck, after he is seated. The curtains of the cabinet are then closed, and the committee requested to keep close watch on the bow-knot on the outside of the cabinet. The assistant, in a short time, pulls back the curtain from the cabinet on the side furthest from the medium, and reveals a sheeted figure which writes messages and speaks to the spectators. Other materializations take place. The curtain is drawn. At this juncture the medium is heard calling, 'Quick, quick. Release me.' The assistant unfastens the bow-knot, the ends of the rope are quickly drawn into the cabinet, and the medium comes forward, looking somewhat exhausted, with the rope still tied about his neck. The question resolves itself into two factors: either the medium gets loose from the necktie and impersonates the spirits, or the materializations are genuine.

"'Gets loose. But that is impossible,' exclaim the committee, 'we watched the cord in the closest way.' The secret of this surprising feat lies in a clever substitution. The tie is genuine, but the medium, after the curtains of the cabinet are closed, *cuts* the cord with a sharp knife, just about the region of the throat, and impersonates the ghosts, with the aid of various wigs and disguises concealed about him. Then he takes a *second* cord from his pocket, ties it about his neck with the same number of knots as are in the original rope, and twists the necktie around so that these knots will appear at the back of his neck. Now he exclaims, 'Quick, quick, unfasten the cord.' As soon as his assistant has untied the simple bow-knot on the outside of the cabinet, the medium quickly pulls the genuine rope into the cabinet and conceals it in his pocket.

"When he presents himself to the spectators the rope about his neck (presumed to be the original) is found to be correctly tied and untampered with. Much of the effect de-

pends on the rapidity with which the medium conceals the original cord and comes out of the cabinet. The author has seen this trick performed in parlors, the holes being bored in a door" (pp. 156-60).

We must now consider, in detail, one very famous tie, made so by Miss Annie Eva Fay; I refer to the "Cotton Bandage Test." This tie, now forever associated with the name of Miss Fay, is one of the most baffling, one of the most ingenious, as well as one of the simplest ties that can be imagined. For the benefit of those of my readers who may not have had the opportunity of seeing Miss Fay perform her act, and in order to make the explanation more easily intelligible, I shall very briefly summarize a description of her séance, which will doubtless prove of interest.

A committee is first of all chosen to come upon the stage and examine the cabinet, the chair, the bandages, etc., and to do the tying later on. Nothing of a suspicious nature is found. The medium is firmly tied about each wrist with a simple cotton bandage, about one and a half inches wide by a half a yard in length. The committee usually ties these bandages in a plain double square knot, drawing each knot down tight, though they are not forced to do so. In order to be certain that these knots are not untied, the committee is allowed to *sew* these knots securely together with a needle and thread, the cotton bandage rendering this quite possible. The medium now places her hands behind her, and, so clasping them that her wrists are but six inches apart, politely requests the more nervous of the two committeemen to tie the ends of the bandage firmly together. After this has been accomplished, the dangling extremities of the bandages are cut off, and the last knot is sewed, if necessary, leaving the medium firmly bound, with a short ligature between her wrists. Another cotton bandage is passed about this ligature and tied in several additional knots, which may also be sewn through. The medium is now seated upon a stool in the cabinet facing the audience, with her back to a wooden stanchion, about six feet high, which has been firmly fastened to the floor. The ends of the cotton bandage are secured to

a ring attached by a staple to the stanchion, at a point just above the stool upon which she is seated. A cotton bandage is then tied about the medium's neck, the ends of which are fastened to a screw-eye affixed to the stanchion, in order to secure her head firmly. Her feet are then fastened together by means of a cord passing around the ankles, the long end of which is carried outside of the cabinet, to be held by one of the committee. A tambourine, tin horn, and one or two bells are now placed in the medium's lap, and the curtain drawn. Instantly the bells are rung, the horn tooted, the tambourine banged, etc., in the midst of which a voice calls for "light," when the cabinet is at once opened and the medium is seen sitting inside, never having moved, apparently. A hoop placed on the medium's lap is found over her shoulders. A tambourine with a glass, partly filled with water, standing upon it, is now placed on the medium's lap; the curtains drawn, but within a few seconds the medium's cry for "light" is heard; the curtain is again withdrawn, and the glass is found empty. This is most astonishing, for it must be remembered that the medium's head is securely tied to the stanchion at the back, and cannot be bent forward one particle, while any assistance from her hands seems impossible. A member of the committee is now chosen, blindfolded, and placed in the cabinet alongside the medium. Sometimes he is allowed to place one hand on the medium's head and the other on her knee. In spite of his presence, however, the usual manifestations occur, though the investigator has not felt the least perceptible movement on the part of the medium.

After this, other tests are undertaken. A tambourine flies out of the cabinet at the aperture, to the amazement of all beholders. A nail is driven into a board by some spirit carpenter, who makes as much noise as if he were still in the flesh. After a number of such tests the performance closes, and the committee is invited to come forward and inspect the knots, etc., and see that they have not been tampered with. A careful examination is made, and the committee announces that the threads are still unbroken, and that it would have

been an utter impossibility for the medium to have untied the knots, or to have produced the manifestations that had been witnessed. In this they were partly right and partly wrong, as we shall now see.

It will, I think, be generally acknowledged that all of the marvels just enumerated could have been accomplished if the medium had the free use of one hand: the bells could be rung, the horn and the glass of water lifted to the mouth, the tambourine thumped, the nail driven into the board, etc. Everything thus depends upon the medium having a certain amount of freedom with this hand, say the right. But it may be objected that this freedom is impossible, since the hands are securely tied and the knots sewn through, rendering it impossible for the medium to untie them without detection. Further, the knots are frequently sealed and the ends fastened together with pieces of sticking-plaster, etc. I grant all that. It *would* be quite impossible for the medium to release herself from this tie in the usual manner. And herein consists the simplicity and the ingenuity of this tie. In order to perform all the marvels I have enumerated, *it is not necessary for the medium to release her hand at all!* Owing to the peculiar method of tying, the medium has all the slack she requires *without* untying the hands or loosening any of the ties or seals whatever. This can easily be shown to be the case by means of a little calculation. Mr. John W. Truesdell was the first to expose the method employed by Miss Fay, if I am not mistaken, and from his *Bottom Facts*, pp. 272-3, I quote the following:

"By the peculiar method in which the medium holds her hands, while submitting to the tying process on the part of the committee, . . . the spirits secure, for their uses, a ligature of knotted cloth between the hands, at least six inches in length. The bandage attached to the centre, as before mentioned, is usually tied in four or five double square knots, allowing, at least, two inches play between the centre of the ligature and the ring to which it is fastened. This ring is two and a half inches in diameter, and is secured to the stanchion by a half-inch staple. The medium's left hand

adds six inches more, while the bandage on her wrist will easily slip along her slender and delicate arm, at least halfway to the elbow, all of which gives the 'spirits' a clear leeway of not less than twenty inches from the stanchion. The moment the curtain is closed, the medium (under spirit influence) spreads her hands as far apart as possible, an act which stretches the knotted ligature so that the bandage about it will easily slip from the centre to either wrist; then, throwing her lithe form, by a quick movement, to the left, so that her hips will pass the stanchion without moving her feet from the floor, the spirits are able, through the medium, to reach whatever may have been placed upon her lap."

I do not think further explanation of this performance will be necessary.

For the sake of historical completeness, however, I should like to state that Mr. Podmore has examined the existing evidence for supernormal phenomena happening in the presence of this medium, and found it to be exceedingly weak and defective in all cases except in the experiments conducted by Sir William Crookes.[1] In this case the medium was seated in a chair, " and two brass handles, wrapped in wet cloths, were given her to hold, the circuit (electric) being thus completed. The index of the galvanometer remained practically constant for some eight minutes, and during those eight minutes, various articles, placed in the library at a considerable distance from the medium, are reported to have been moved, a hand was seen thrust through the curtain, a locked desk was opened, and so on. At the end of the eight minutes the index went to zero, and the medium was found in a fainting condition." Mr. Podmore suggests that the medium previously provided herself with some " connecting substance (*pace* Mr. Lang!) of a resistance approximately equal to that of her body." As she had (probably) been previously tested before in this manner, by Serjeant Cox,[2] she came

[1] *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 85-6 and 157-8.
[2] *Mechanism of Man*, Vol. II., p. 446.

to this séance with a knowledge of the apparatus, and the sort of test to which she was to be submitted.[1]

I have reserved for special and somewhat lengthy consideration the method of tying employed by the Davenport brothers — this for several reasons. I now turn to a consideration of their performance, describing it in some detail.

The Davenport brothers were undoubtedly the mediums who first brought rope-tying séances to the public attention. Their reputation was anything but spotless, as Mr. Podmore shows.[2] But, quite apart from such evidence as Mr. Podmore has accumulated, it is well known by the conjuring fraternity that their performances were fraudulent. Mr. Maskelyne detected the actual methods of the Davenport brothers by seeing, with his own eyes, the method of their escape. This occurred owing to an accident, a curtain falling at an inopportune moment. He afterward succeeded in exactly duplicating, and even improving upon, their performance.[3] Their methods were well known to the late Alexander Hermann. By far the most convincing piece of evidence of all, however, is the fact that the magician, Harry Kellar, served in the capacity of assistant to the Davenport brothers for a considerable time, and learned from them the mysteries of rope-tying![4] In the face of evidence of this kind, I do not see how any intelligent person, who is in possession of the facts of the case, can hesitate for one moment in declaring the Davenport brothers clever tricksters.

In order to clear away any doubts in my readers' minds, however, that the performance of the brothers Davenport was trickery, and nothing but trickery, and partly because of the great influence of these mediums on the history of the subject, I give, herewith, a detailed description of the methods employed by the Davenports, both for their dark and light séances, and I shall use, for this purpose, the narrative-description given by Houdin, in his *Secrets of Stage*

[1] It must be remembered that the present Annie Eva Fay, who is giving public performances through the United States, is not the original medium of that name — though I do not deny that they are of the same *genus*.

[2] *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., p. 60. [3] *The Supernatural?* p. 190.

[4] *Magic and Its Professors*, p. 72.

Conjuring, pp. 160-213. I quote from this account for two reasons: *first*, because it is given by a trained observer and conjurer, and I think it a good example of the differences between "what actually occurred" and "what apparently took place." *Second*, because it is so little known. I do not remember that Mr. Podmore, with all his exhaustive reading, even mentioned this account in his *Modern Spiritualism*, and, indeed, it is known to but few persons outside of the regular conjuring fraternity, as it occurs in a work on stage magic which would be unlikely to fall into the hands of any one not especially interested in that branch of reading. The account is intensely interesting, and is worth quoting at length. For these reasons I have given considerable space to this quotation, which, I feel sure, the reader will agree is well occupied, when he comes to read the report.

The Performance of the Brothers Davenport

Part I. — The Cabinet. — We are in one of the smaller rooms belonging to the *Salle Herz*, in the *Rue de la Victoire*, a room which may accommodate some sixty persons. The apartment is divided by a railing of a little more than a yard high into two equal portions. On the one side of this division are the seats allotted to the spectators, and on the other the cabinet which is intended to be used for the performance. This piece of furniture, which is of the slightest possible construction, rests on trestles, and is of such a size as to contain just three persons, seated or standing. To the sides of the cabinet, on the inside, are hung divers musical instruments, such as a violin, guitar, trumpet, tambourine, and bell. Three doors to be closed as occasion may require serve to screen the mediums from the public view.

Before the commencement of the performance, several of the spectators are invited to come within the railed-off portion of the room, and to place themselves in a circle round the cabinet, so as to bar all communication from without.

The first point is the binding of the two Americans. All present agree in selecting, for the performance of this deli-

cate task, a veteran naval officer, who is expert in knots of every description, and in whose skill every one appears to have the utmost confidence.

The ropes which are intended to be used are first tendered for examination. We search the two young men as if we were representatives of the police force, and having taken every possible precaution against any trick or artifice, we turn our attention to the actual tying.

The Americans step into the cabinet, and place themselves on the seats to which they are to be tied. Our naval representative takes a cord, marks it, to make sure that there is no substitution; he takes note of its precise length, and then, by means of regular "sailors' knots," hitherto reputed invincible, he ties up, first one brother, then the other. He pinions their arms to their sides, ties their legs firmly together; in fact, he so ties and lashes them to their seats and to the cross-rails, that every one regards the defeat of the Americans as a foregone conclusion; they must, beyond a doubt, be driven to cry for quarter.

We have stated that the cabinet has three doors. In the middle is cut, at about the height of a man's head, a lozenge-shaped aperture. The side doors are first closed, simultaneously, and lastly the centre door, but, *mirabile dictu*, scarcely has this last been closed, than we see appear, at the opening above mentioned, the arms of the right-hand prisoner, — still rosy with the friction of the famous "sailors' knots." The surprise, the astonishment, nay, the stupefaction of the spectators, are beyond description; they hesitate to believe the testimony of their own eyes; they fugitively glance around, each seeking to confirm his own impressions by those of his neighbor; but all are in the same condition of bewilderment, and equally unable to afford the slightest guidance. Finally, they give up the riddle as hopeless, and render to the performers a well-earned tribute of applause.

A little later, and the three doors are opened. We see the two brothers, with smiling countenances, step down from the cabinet freed from their bonds, which they now carry in their hands. More than ten minutes had been occupied in

tying them up; a single minute had sufficed for their release.

This first feat concluded, the young men again step into the cabinet, and take their seats. The cords are laid in a heap at their feet, and the doors closed. Two minutes later, the doors are opened, and we find the mediums again in bondage. They have tied themselves up in the darkness, and their hands are found firmly secured behind their backs. The tying is examined, and is declared to be as secure as on the first occasion. It should here be repeated that, during the whole of the *séance*, sundry spectators keep constant watch on all sides of the cabinet; that this latter is raised on trestles; and that the hall is kept sufficiently light to enable any one to see without difficulty.

Now, however, still more astonishing phenomena are about to take place. The doors are put to with the utmost possible quickness, but scarcely is the last one closed, than a *concerto* of the most eccentric character becomes audible; the violin strikes up under the touch of a vigorously handled bow, the guitar is thrummed, the tambourine marks time, the bell rings, the horn is vigorously blown, the whole forming a discord of the most awful description. Occasionally a variety of other noises, knocks, and heavy blows, is added to the infernal concert. Suddenly there is dead silence, and an arm, bare to the shoulder, is seen to pass through a hole in the door, ringing the bell with frantic energy.

At the very moment when the noise is most deafening, if the doors of the cabinet are suddenly opened, the musical instruments are seen in the place they originally occupied, and the two brothers are motionless on their seats, and tied up as before. As soon as the doors are closed, the hullabaloo begins again, but each time that the doors are opened, the mediums are found, calm, motionless, and still firmly tied. I have forgotten to mention that at each of the "spiritualistic manifestations" the horn and the bell are flung through the opening in the door and fall at the feet of the spectators.

By way of check upon these tricksy spirits, it is requested

that some one of the company, to be selected by the audience, will take a seat in the cabinet between the two brothers. A representative is selected accordingly; he places himself on the seat in the centre, and in order to ensure his giving no assistance to the mediums, one of his hands is tied to the shoulder of one of the brothers, and his other hand upon the knee of the other brother. This arrangement further ensures that there can be no movement on the part of the mediums without the knowledge of the person thus chosen. As soon as the doors are closed, however, the witches' sabbath is again heard in the cabinet, the various musical instruments appearing to vie with each other, which shall make the most noise. An instant, and the hubbub ceases; the doors are opened, and the unlucky visitor is seen with his head wrapped in his own pocket-handkerchief, with the tambourine by way of head-dress, while his cravat is neatly tied around the neck of his right-hand neighbor, his spectacles are on the nose of his left-hand neighbor, and his watch, even, is found to have travelled from one pocket to another. The representative of the public is freed from his encumbrances, and is instantly surrounded and cross-questioned. He declares that all he felt was a slight tickling of the nose, when, at the selfsame moment, he was covered with his pocket-handkerchief, and robbed of his spectacles, and can give no other explanation. Meanwhile, the wrists of the mediums are still found firmly tied behind their backs. Flour is produced, and a little is put, with a spoon, into each hand of the mediums. No sooner is the door closed than the coat of one of the prisoners is passed through the aperture. The doors are instantly opened, the knots examined, the doors again closed, and scarcely two minutes elapse before the two brothers step out of the cabinet entirely freed from their bonds; they come forward to the spectators and show that their hands are still full of the flour which had been placed therein. It should be stated that the young men are dressed in black, and that not the slightest trace of flour is to be seen on their garments.

Part II. — The Dark Séance. — The scenic arrangements of this exhibition are of the simplest possible character. The cabinet and its trestles are removed and put on one side, and are replaced by a small table, on which are placed two guitars and a tambourine, which we have already seen employed in the first part of the performance.

These preparations, which are very deliberately made, have given the two brothers time to take a little rest in an adjoining room. They speedily return, and seat themselves on two slightly made chairs, one on each side of the table. Each places at his feet a coil of rope.

At their request, made through their interpreter, some fourteen or fifteen members of the audience come and take seats near the Americans, and, joining hands, form an impenetrable wall round them. Two gas-jets, one on each side of the enclosed portion of the hall, are alone lighted. A person is posted beside each of these burners, to turn the light up or down as may be required.

At a signal given by one of the two brothers, the room is placed in complete darkness for a space of about two minutes. A solemn silence prevails throughout the assembly, so much are all present impressed by the weird singularity of the scene. The privileged spectators who form the protective circle are so close to the mediums, that the least movement on the part of the latter, the slightest rustle of their garments, would be distinctly audible. Each lends an attentive ear, and seeks to catch the slightest sound of a suspicious character, but, in the very midst of this strained attention, the light is suddenly turned up, and the two Americans are seen securely tied; their legs, arms, and bodies are alike covered with a network of cords binding them to the chairs on which they were seated; their wrists are pinioned behind their backs, and lashed to the "stretchers" of the chairs. The chairs are likewise firmly tied to the table. Spectators gather round, they examine the various knots, and are constrained to admit that they are honestly tied.

Again we are placed in darkness, and instantly the musical instruments placed on the table are heard in mysterious

harmony. Suddenly, the gas is turned up, and, simultaneously with the appearance of the light, the concert ceases. The instruments show no sign of having moved from their places, and the mediums are tied up as before.

The spectators begin to experience an indescribable sensation of "all-over-ishness." There is very little applause; a performance of this kind is not calculated to produce a feeling of exaltation. On the contrary, it rather tends to make one feel a kind of nervous depression. True believers regard the phenomena in question as the genuine work of spirits, and even the incredulous and the skeptical are forced to admit that these pretended supernatural manifestations are, to say the least, remarkably well executed. As yet, moreover, we have by no means arrived at the most remarkable phenomena of this mysterious performance.

In order to afford the company absolute certainty that the ligatures are not unfastened, one of the spectators who happens to be nearest is asked to apply some melted sealing-wax to the knots which bind the wrists, and to impress a seal thereon. Meanwhile, the guitars and the tambourine are smeared with a phosphorescent liquid which renders them distinguishable in the dark.

The moment that the room is again placed in darkness, the guitars and the tambourine begin to move, and leave the places they occupy, at the same time producing the most lugubrious sounds. They are seen to rise in the air, and to move about in luminous curves; then to take an erratic course, and wander about the hall, flitting just over the heads of the spectators. One guitar just ruffles this gentleman's hair, another brushes against that gentleman's coat; and yet, though frequently moving in an abrupt and jerky manner, neither of the instruments comes in actual contact with either the spectators or the ceiling; at most, as they pass close to your face, you feel a sudden draught, a puff of wind that causes you instinctively to draw your head back, for fear of receiving a blow. The situation is rather painful than pleasant. One experiences a sort of indefinable feeling

of *dread*, which for the time being paralyzes the reflective faculties.

In the middle of these eccentric evolutions the lights are turned up, and the instruments are found resting on the laps of the spectators. The seals of the knots are examined, and are found to be unbroken.

A further precaution is now taken to guarantee the spectators against any trickery, if they still entertain any doubt on the subject. A sheet of paper is placed under the feet of each of the mediums, and the outline of his boots is traced with a pencil thereon. If by some mysterious means they manage to get free from their bonds, and to leave their seats, this sheet of paper will betray them. If it is shifted but a quarter of an inch, trickery stands confessed. The public appear to put complete faith in this test. In addition, a spectator is requested to take off his coat or overcoat, and to lay it across his knees.

These arrangements being completed, the gas is extinguished, and during some few minutes of darkness, the guitars again strike up their unearthly music, and recommence their eccentric movements. But, even while these musical will-o'-the-wisps are still hovering in space, one spectator finds himself suddenly deprived of his hat, which is wafted several yards away; another has his hair dishevelled by mysterious fingers; a third feels his hand shaken by an invisible hand; the coat, above referred to, is whisked away from its owner, while another spectator finds on his lap some indistinguishable garment-like object. When the gas is relighted, the two brothers are seen perfectly composed, still bound, and apparently quite innocent of any concern with what has just taken place. A rush is made to examine the seals, they are found intact; the sheet of paper is inspected, the sole has not shifted by a hair's-breadth from the outline traced around it. But the fact which puts a climax to the general astonishment is, that one of the brothers, though still tied up and the knots sealed, is wearing the spectator's missing coat, while the other has a hat on his head and a pair of spectacles on his nose. These three articles belong to

three different spectators. The medium's own coat is found in the hall on the lap of one of the spectators.

At this stage of the proceedings, the astonishment, indeed, one might say the stupefaction, the bewilderment of the audience reaches its utmost limit; spiritualistic manifestation or imposture, supernatural phenomenon or mere conjuring tricks, the performance is perfect of its kind. Putting aside for the moment reflection or investigation, we simply make up our minds to pay the performers a well-earned tribute of applause.

Explanation of the Artifices Whereby the Pretended Spiritualistic Manifestations and the "Inexplicable" Phenomena of the Brothers Davenport Are Produced.

Ordinary conjurers, as a rule, use special apparatus to facilitate the execution of their marvels. The Davenports have, strictly speaking, nothing but their "ropes." The cabinet lends no assistance whatever in the actual execution of the tricks. An ordinary screen and a couple of chairs might, on emergency, be used in its stead. It serves, in truth, simply to cover the manipulations of the mediums. The musical instruments may be considered as mere accessories.

The ropes used are of cotton fibre; their make is the same as that of the cords which are used to draw curtains backward and forward, and they present therefore smooth surfaces, adapted to slip easily one upon another. In length they are about ten feet.

When, at the outset of the performance, a certain number of spectators are invited to step upon the platform, and to surround the cabinet, they are requested to join hands, under the pretext of establishing a magnetic circle around the mediums. In reality, the object is to preclude the possibility of individual attempts to solve the mystery. For the same reason, the spectators in the front row are required to join hands in like manner.

The two brothers place themselves on the seats of the

cabinet, and each hands three ropes to the person selected to secure him to his seat. At first sight it may be imagined that this is a very easy matter, but in truth it is quite the reverse. To begin with, upon what system will you proceed, and where will you commence? You have in all probability never before had occasion to bind a prisoner. Sometimes the person appointed is of an easy-going disposition; he thinks less of creating difficulties for his victim than of getting his task well over; he ties his man up "anyhow," so to speak. In such case everything is in favor of the success of the trick. But very often, on the other hand, the medium has to do with a keen and vigorous antagonist, who takes a serious view of the duty he has undertaken, and considers his own reputation for smartness at stake. His first proceeding is to place the hands of the patient behind his back and to fasten them there securely. He next brings the cord to the front, thence back again; passes it under the arms, and finishes off with a knot which he regards as invincible. With the two remaining cords he surrounds the feet, the thighs, and arms of the medium, and lashes these parts also firmly to the seats of the cabinet. Vain precaution! Every knot, every form of ligature is necessarily capable of being again untied.

While he is being tied up, the medium places himself in any position which may be required of him; but with his keen Yankee eye, he sees at once the kind of person with whom he has to do. The easy-going representative he does not trouble himself about; he lets such a person do just as he pleases. But with the other kind of delegate he is keenly on the watch, and strives silently to neutralize his hostile intentions. If he finds himself being too tightly tied, he utters a faint cry of pain, which, however, he makes believe at once to repress. This little piece of acting nearly always succeeds; the rest of the ligatures are almost invariably tied with a certain amount of forbearance. Or again, the medium, without appearing to do so, expands various portions of his frame, either by simply raising his shoulders, holding the arms away from the body, or lastly, by opposing a

secret resistance in the direction in which the pressure is the strongest.

When the tying up is complete, the first endeavor of the medium is, by dint of a particular movement which it is impossible to describe, to work up toward the shoulders the cords which are round the forearms, so as to give these last a little freedom. Next comes a process of pulling and straining; the wrists, drawn vigorously apart, operate as levers straining against the loops through which they pass; and, by persistent pulling, they stretch such parts of the cord as may be susceptible of such extension. A quarter of an inch, or little more, of play, will suffice for the deliverance of one or the other hand. It should be stated, that by dint of special practice, on the part of our mediums, the thumb is made to lie flat in the hand, when the whole assumes a cylindrical form of scarcely greater diameter than the wrist.

The first to get free of the four hands is passed through the opening, and shows itself to the spectators, while the three others still labor for the common deliverance. The hands once free, the remaining cords and the knots are then untied; the teeth rendering valuable service in this particular.

Ira Davenport . . . is cleverer and more active than his brother, and is almost invariably the first to release himself. When this is so, he helps William. In any case, the first to get free assists the other.

When the mediums bind themselves in their cabinet, the mode of tying which they employ enables them to free themselves and again secure themselves in an extremely small space of time. . . .

To produce such arrangement they proceed as follows: They take one of the cords by the middle, and form at that point a bow or double loop. (To produce this knot, all that is necessary is to wind the cord once round the fingers, and through the ring thus formed to draw a small portion of the cord on each side, in opposite directions.)

The reader will perceive that this is in fact a double slip-knot, the loops of which may be diminished or increased in

size, according as the ends . . . are drawn tight or released (*v.* Fig. XIII., p. 164).

Leaving the two loops open as above, the performers pass through two holes, bored purposely in the seat, the two ends of the cord, which is long enough to be tied round their feet, and attached to the cross-bar in front. With the two other cords, they bind their thighs to the side rails, and sometimes also the arms close to the body. This done, they pass their hands through the loops, which they then draw tight by extending their legs slightly forward. Upon this "dodge" rests the whole pretended intervention of the spirits and the racket in which they indulge. In point of fact, no sooner are the doors of the cabinet closed than the two brothers draw back their legs a little and slacken the knot, thus enabling themselves to draw out their hands and to become free. The violin, the guitars, the tambourine, and the bell are almost instantaneously set in motion, making a row of the most hideous description, which is still further enhanced by occasional kicks and thumps on the sides of the cabinet itself. After a short interval the instruments are restored to their original positions, the wrists are replaced in their ligatures, the doors are flung open, and all appear in due order as at first.

A representative selected by the audience is requested, as already described, to step upon the platform; he takes his place in the cabinet upon the seat in the middle. One of his hands is tied to Ira's shoulder, and the other to William's knee. But is it not obvious that this precaution, which is ostensibly taken *against* the two brothers, is really in their favor? They have no need, in truth, to stir either knee or shoulder in order to carry out their mischievous pranks; and the stranger, having his hands tied, has no control whatever over their proceedings. He becomes a mere dummy; and under such circumstances, there is not the least difficulty in removing his spectacles (if he wears any), his necktie, or his pocket-handkerchief, and in crowning him with the tambourine.

Placing flour in the hands of the two brothers does not at

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

all interfere with their drawing them out of the slip-knot. The hands once free, they pour the flour into a pocket made on purpose in their coats, wipe their hands on the inside of the pocket, then pass them one after another through the opening in the door, to show that they are free, and finally indulge, as before, in their noisy *concerto;* after which, one of the brothers takes from his side pocket a little paper bag filled with flour, pours some into the hands of his companion and into one of his own, replaces the empty bag in its hiding-place, and then gives his other hand its due proportion of flour. The doors are opened, and the two brothers, freed from their bonds, come forward to show the public that their hands are still full of flour.

This little "flour test" terminated on one occasion in a manner which was rather embarrassing to the mediums, though highly diverting to the spectators. The person deputed to place flour in the hands of the mediums hit on the cute idea of using *snuff* instead. The mediums saw nothing of the change, for at the moment in question, their hands are held behind their backs. The two brothers reappeared with flour in their hands! The trick which had been played upon them was then explained, and there was a hearty laugh all round, except, indeed, on the part of the discomfited tricksters.

The explanation of the second portion, or *Dark Séance,* will be readily understood, inasmuch as the tricks still mainly rest on the famous "slip-knot" of which we have already spoken. The two brothers are seated on either side of a table, on which are laid the guitars and tambourines; they have at their feet a heap of cords; around them is formed the magnetic circle of spectators, each holding the hand of his neighbor. The lights are turned down, and forthwith the two brothers lash themselves to their chairs after the manner above described. . . . The only difference lies in the form of the seats used. Just as in the case of the cabinet, they can at pleasure fasten or unfasten themselves, and play the instruments which are on the table.

But, it may be asked, how do they manage when the knot

which attaches them is sealed? The reader will note (from the description given above) that it is quite possible to put wax on the middle of the knot, and even to seal the two portions of the cord at this point firmly together, without the movement of the ends A or B, or that of the loops themselves, being at all interfered with. When the wrists are placed in the loops, this portion of the knot is always uppermost. And, further, the interpreter takes good care to indicate the precise point at which the seal is to be applied, adding a request that the investigator will be careful not to allow the melted wax to touch the wrists. This remark is sure to induce an amount of reserve which is very favorable to the success of the trick. Finally, it should be remarked, that the cord being as thick as the little finger, the impression of the seal cannot possibly extend beyond the point of junction of the two fixed portions.

We have, however, still sundry marvels to explain, *viz.*, the fantastic evolutions of the guitars, the sheet of paper under the feet, the coat taken off and replaced, etc.

The guitars and the tambourine are smeared with a phosphorescent liquid whose faint glimmer does not shine brightly enough to reveal the outline of surrounding objects. The company are therefore in total darkness. Ira frees himself from his bonds, and, by the aid of a faculty which he has acquired of seeing in the dark (*nyctalopia*), he seizes one of the luminous guitars by the neck, steps forward with it as close as possible to the circle of spectators, and waves it over their heads, at the same time twanging the strings with the third and fourth fingers. The absence of any other object wherewith to compare prevents the spectator forming any decided judgment as to the *distance* of this vaguely luminous body; indeed, I have myself known a guitar which was almost touching my head to appear to be several yards away. Meanwhile, the other medium, having so sufficiently freed himself from his bonds, holds up the other phosphorescent guitar and tambourine as high as he can, and with these two instruments makes as much noise and as much movement as possible.

The trick of the outline of the feet marked on the sheet of paper is very ingenious. Ira, after the above measure of precaution has been duly taken, quits his position on the sheet of paper in order to approach the spectators, but when he returns to his seat, takes care to *turn over* the sheet of paper before placing his feet upon it; and then, by means of a pencil, which he takes from one of his pockets, he traces *another* outline, which is taken to be the same which had been made by the public.

The "coat" trick is worked as follows: Ira, freed from his bonds, takes off his coat, throws it into the middle of the hall, and catching up one which he has had placed on the lap of a spectator in the front row, puts it on instead, then replaces himself in his ligatures, and the trick is done.

CHAPTER VIII

SPIRIT POSTS, SACKS, HANDCUFFS, ETC.

I NOW pass on to consider, briefly, other varieties of "spirit ties," in which other methods are employed, in securing the medium, than merely tying him with ropes; but, inasmuch as many of these partake more of the nature of conjuring tricks than spiritualistic manifestations, properly speaking, and are found described in the numerous books devoted to magic, etc., I shall give only a slight résumé of such methods and devices, and shall refer my interested reader to the various books from which I shall quote, for further information on this most interesting subject. As a book of this character, however, would not be complete without some mention of such fraudulent methods, and as many persons really do believe that the medium or performer (as the case may be) escapes from his bonds in some "supernatural" manner, it will be necessary for me to describe some of the most frequently used methods, and explain the manner of release from these ties, locks, handcuffs, etc.

The first of these that I shall describe is known to the initiated as "the spiritualistic post test." The test is this. A solid beam of wood is fastened to the floor in an upright position, in any manner the committee may please, nailed, screwed, etc., so as to make sure that the post is not removed from its place, when once it has been fastened. A hole is now bored through the post (by one of the committee also), near the top, and a piece of ordinary rope (which may be examined) is passed through this hole and fastened with a knot on each side. This prevents the rope from being drawn

in either direction. The medium's hands are now securely fastened to the post by means of the loose ends of the rope, and the knots may be sealed as much as desired. A nail is then driven into the top of the post, and around this nail (which is only partly driven home) is passed a second rope, the two ends of which pass through small openings in the sides of the cabinet, and are held by members of the committee. This ensures that the post does not move from the floor during the course of the experiments. Apparently nothing could be fairer or more secure; nevertheless, manifestations take place as soon as the curtains are drawn; *immediately* they are drawn, in fact.

It is hardly necessary to state that it is the medium who is producing all the manifestations, and that he has escaped from his bonds in spite of the elaborate precautions taken to preclude that possibility. This is how the trick is performed. Before the séance begins, the medium selects his post, and in the centre of one *end* of this he bores a hole, into which he inserts a sharp chisel with a large, flat head, instead of a handle, which is missing. The hole is then closed, either with a plug of the same wood, or with a mixture of glue and sawdust. The post now presents the appearance of any other piece of wood, and a close examination is necessary before it becomes evident that the post has been tampered with in any way. Now, when it comes to the boring of the hole, the medium knows how far down his hidden chisel comes, and *starts* the bit, allowing the committee to finish the operation of boring the hole. He calculates to have the hole bored *just below* the edge of his hidden chisel. The rope is now passed through this opening and knotted.

There is no trickery about the tying and sealing of the medium; that is genuine enough. The trick consists (as usual) in the methods employed to protect the unsuspecting public against trickery! The medium states that the nail is driven into the top of the post and the ropes passed about it, "to demonstrate that the post does not stir from its position, during the manifestations," but the *real* purpose of that manœuvre, it will readily be seen, is to free the medium.

Thus: the nail strikes the flat iron head of the chisel, and forces that down farther into the post, and, as the rope is directly under the chisel, it is evident that the rope is cut by the knife-edge of the chisel, which passes through it. The rope is severed; and the medium has only to remove his (now) freed hands to produce any manifestations he chooses. After the manifestations are concluded, he merely has to replace the two ends of the severed rope in the holes in the "spirit post," and the trick is accomplished.

There is a very elaborate mechanical post used by some mediums, which is exceedingly ingenious. In this case the ropes are examined and passed through the hole in the post, which already exists. The medium's hands are then bound to the post, as in the last case. The manifestations follow as usual.

The trick consists mainly in the post. It is hollow, and inside it is a sliding iron weight, square, through which is bored a hole corresponding to the holes in the post, when the weight is raised to the highest point, inside the hollow tube. A rope may thus be passed through the post, *and the weight*, and when this weight falls to the bottom of the post, it would carry with it the rope, there thus being a sort of loop made in the rope, and this is kept looped by the weight itself. There is a catch at the top of the post which prevents the weight from falling until the medium releases it by means of a spring. There is also a spring catch at the foot of the post, which keeps the weight securely in place, when once it has fallen to the bottom, and is released only by pressure upon a concealed spring.

The method of working the trick should now be plain. The weight is drawn up to the top of the post and fastened there before the séance, and the cord is, of course, passed through it (the weight), when it is passed through the hole in the post. The medium now stands in front of the post for a moment, thus hiding it from the sitters, and at that moment he presses the catch that releases the weight, which falls to the bottom of the post, inside, carrying with it a certain loop of the rope. This fact is concealed by the body

of the medium, who stands in front of the post at that moment, for that express purpose. The weight is caught and fastened by the catch at the foot of the post, thereby securing the "slack" of the rope. The medium is now tied to the post and the knots sealed, etc. All the medium has to do, in order to effect his release, is to press upon the hidden spring, at the foot of the post, which allows the weight to be drawn up, inside, by a mere extension of the hands. The manifestations then take place. All he has to do in order to retie himself is to replace his hands in the loops, and allow the weight to sink to the bottom of the post, where it is caught and secured by the spring catch. An examination may now be made.

Sleight-of-hand performers have devoted a great deal of time and trouble devising elaborate pieces of apparatus which would render the escape of the performer possible, in spite of the most elaborate tying and fastening and padlocking of the performer to the board or couch to which he is fastened. It may fairly be said that an escape from these positions is much more wonderful than any of the ordinary rope ties extant. In one of these illusions, the performer is fastened to a previously examined board by hinged, iron staples, these being padlocked down to the board and the keys kept by members of the committee. The board is now lifted, with the performer still upon it, and suspended at some distance from the floor by four chains, one of which is attached to each corner of the board. A curtain is now drawn around the board and performer for a few seconds, and, on being removed, the performer has vanished! The audience could see under the board throughout the entire performance, and the board is suspended in the centre of the stage. I cannot now go into a detailed explanation of this trick, as this would require considerable space and a number of illustrations to make it clear. It will be found described in full in Hopkins's *Magic, Stage Illusions*, etc., pp. 529-32.

Another illusion of very much the same character was devised by Mr. Maskelyne, some years ago, which he called

"The Spiritualistic Couch." The performer is, in this case, clamped down to a padded couch, which is raised from off the stage by three solid legs, enabling the audience to see under the couch during the manifestations. A short curtain is now passed around the couch, hiding the performer, but not reaching to the floor, and the medium's hands are passed through small openings in the curtains, where they can be observed by the audience during the entire manifestations. No one can possibly approach the couch, which is surrounded by members of the audience, and the medium obviously cannot perform the marvels himself, since his hands are in full view the entire time! Manifestations take place, nevertheless; and they are the result of trickery. The explanation will be found in Burlingame's *Tricks in Magic*, Vol. III., pp. 11-14.

A very effective escape is from what is known as "The Pillory." In this case the medium is handcuffed and fastened to the pillory by passing his hands and neck through holes in the hinged board, which is then secured by means of a padlock. The apparatus in this case is very ingenious and very complicated. An explanation will be found on pp. 59-61 of Shaw's *New Ideas in Magic*, etc.

I have referred to these tests for the reason that the escapes from these pieces of apparatus is so much more wonderful than the ordinary rope-tying experiments that the latter sink into comparative insignificance when compared with them. The only reply that can be made to this is that the above effects are performed with the aid of prepared apparatus, and on a stage, and the medium produces *his* results in the middle of an unprepared room, surrounded by skeptical investigators, and comes unprepared for the test. To this I reply that for the particular *kinds* of phenomena that occur, no stage or special apparatus is necessary; it is just as easy to produce the phenomena there as in any other place; and as to the last statement, how do you know that the medium has come "all unprepared?" As a matter of fact, this is probably not the case at all; but even if he *had*, the majority of mediumistic tricks require no prepara-

tion at all, and so that objection is disposed of. The medium has selected precisely those tricks that *are* producible subject to the conditions under which he must work. The results are inevitable.

I now pass on to consider "sack tests," *i. e.*, those tests in which the medium is tied up in a sack, only his head projecting, or, in some cases, that too being inside, and the mouth of the sack fastened with rope, tape, etc., the knots being tied by members of the audience and the knots sealed by them also. The medium is placed, still in the sack, inside his cabinet, and the usual manifestations take place. These tests are most convincing; and it is stated that one of these, the one I described on pp. 175-9, has converted as many persons to spiritualism as any one test extant! When we come to it, however, we shall see what a simple piece of trickery it is.

One method of performing the sack test is the following: The medium is provided with *two* sacks exactly alike. One of these he conceals under his coat and trouser-leg, the mouth-end of the sack being upward. The second sack is brought forward and offered for examination. It is free from trickery, and is finally handed back to the medium with a statement to that effect. The medium then gets into this sack, which is then gathered up about him, and over his head. A "magnetized handkerchief" is tied around the neck of the sack, "to keep in the influences." The manager does this. The mouth of the sack is gathered together, tied up tightly with rope or string, fastened with several knots, and sealed. Just before the tying, however, a lady's handkerchief and a gentleman's pocket-knife are borrowed and dropped into the sack. The medium is now lifted into his cabinet, and, in a few moments, the usual manifestations begin. At the close of the séance the medium is found to have been miraculously released from the sack, which is still tied and sealed, however, and the articles previously borrowed are still inside the sack. A thorough examination may be made, the only effect of which is to heighten the mystery.

When the medium gets into the sack, and it is pulled up about his head, the manager contrives to put his hands *into* the sack, and gets hold of the top of the duplicate sack (which the medium is wearing down his back, it must be remembered), and pulls *this* sack up above the mouth of the first sack, gathering it together, preparatory to tying. As the joining of the two sacks would be visible, were they left thus, the manager ties the " magnetized handkerchief " over the joining of the two sacks, thus effectually concealing it. The borrowed articles are dropped into the first sack, the one which passes down the medium's back, and it is *this* sack that is tied up and sealed. The medium is then placed in his cabinet. As soon as he is in it, and the door or curtain safely closed, the medium slips out of the one sack altogether, and pulls the sack out which is down his back. That sack is now ready for inspection, and is the one finally shown. All the medium has to do, now, is to conceal the second sack about his person, and produce whatever manifestations he desires.

Another and much better sack test is the following. A sack is given for thorough examination, and may be marked, thus showing that there is no substitution. The medium then gets into the sack, which is gathered up over his head, and securely tied with rope, the ends being fastened in a number of knots, and securely sealed by the committee. The medium is then placed (still in the sack, of course) in his cabinet, and the usual manifestations ensue. At the conclusion of the séance, the medium steps out from behind the screen or cabinet, holding the sack in one hand, and the still knotted rope in the other. Both are again subjected to a thorough examination, without anything of a suspicious nature being discovered.

There is no trickery about the sack or the rope, both of which are perfectly genuine; the trick lies in the tying of the sack. As, however, the committee does this, it seems impossible that trickery could be employed, but it is, nevertheless! The principal factor in the medium's escape consists in a piece of apparatus which the committee never sees.

This is a little plug or bolster made of cloth, and stuffed *very tightly* with a mixture of rags and straw, or some similar mixture that will "give" very little. When the mouth of the sack is being gathered together, the medium extracts this little bolster, previously hidden, and inserts it into the mouth of the sack, so that the loose folds of the sack are tied around this bolster, which is enclosed within them. The rope is now tied, sealed, etc. When the medium is placed in his cabinet, therefore, all he has to do is to catch hold of this bolster, and pull it forcibly into the sack, and he can now thrust his hand and arm through the hole thus left (the bolster is about the same size as the medium's wrist), and remove the rope *en masse*, without disturbing the seals, or even the coils. The way is now clear for the medium, who slips out of the sack, and the trick is done. I described a method of working this sack test, in *Mahatma*, Vol. III., No. 7, January, 1900.

Magicians have invented a very clever sack test, in which the medium is fastened in a sack, the mouth of which is placed in a steel or brass band or collar, and this is fastened by means of a padlock, the key of which is in the hands of the committee. As, however, this test necessitates the employment of a regular stage, and consequently partakes more of the nature of a conjuring trick than a mediumistic séance, I shall not describe it here. A full explanation, with diagrams, will be found in *Mahatma*, Vol. VI., Nos. 7 and 8, January and February, 1903.

I come now to the sack test referred to on p. 173, and which is, in many respects, by far the cleverest of all. The effect will first of all be described, and then the explanation will be given, this course of procedure serving the double purpose of best describing the trick, and forming, *per se*, a miniature chapter in the psychology of deception.

A large sack, about six feet high, is brought forward, and offered for examination. It is made of any light material, and a narrow hem runs around the mouth of the sack, through which runs a piece of tape. The tape may be examined, and, in fact, it may be altogether taken out and re-

placed by other tape, if the sitters so desire. Nothing peculiar is noted about the sack, with the exception of two small slits or openings, about two inches in length, which are buttonholed (worked), and to the existence of which the medium calls attention. They are used in securing the medium, as we shall presently see, and are not for any purposes of deception at all. The examination of the sack having been completed, the medium brings forward two pieces of tape, each about a yard long, and these are fastened around the medium's wrists, one around each, in the following manner. The tape is bound twice around the wrist, pulled tight, and secured by a series of knots, which may be sealed as much as desired. It would be quite impossible for the medium to remove the tapes from his wrists without signs being left on the tape, if, indeed, they could be removed at all. The medium next gets into the sack, which is drawn up (gathered by means of the threaded tape) about his neck, his head being outside the sack. The sack is gathered together *tightly*, by means of the tape, so that not even a finger can be inserted between the mouth of the sack and the medium's neck. The ends of the tape are tied together, in a number of knots, and these are sealed by the committee. The medium now seats himself in a chair. It will be remembered that, when the sack was gathered about the neck, the tapes were not cut off, and there is consequently about two feet of tape left over, at each of the ends. These ends are passed about the bars at the back of the chair, two or three times, tied in several knots, and the knots sealed. So much for the fastening of the mouth of the sack. The medium's hands have yet to be secured!

We must not forget the tapes that have been tied around the medium's wrists. We now turn to these. The medium passes the two loose ends of the tape which have been tied around his right wrist through the afore-mentioned buttonhole on the right side, and the two ends hanging from his left wrist through the buttonhole on his left side. The committee catch hold of these tapes, and secure them by tying them about the back of the chair, and sealing the knots, as

before. The medium's hands are then tied firmly to the back of the chair. If desired, the medium's legs and body may also be secured to the chair with ropes. Apparently, no tying could possibly be fairer or more secure, the operation having taken a considerable time, as a rule. The curtains of the cabinet are drawn and the room darkened. And now, notwithstanding all these test conditions, the usual manifestations take place; hands and faces are seen, musical instruments are played upon, and " full-form materializations " walk from the cabinet! After the séance is finished, an examination will show you that the medium's condition is the same as before the séance began. Not a tape or seal has been touched. Full forms have come from the cabinet, yet here is the medium tightly tied up in the sack. It is not possible that it was he!

This exceedingly clever test is worked as follows. The sack is perfectly free from preparation with the exception of one fact, which is apparently of such slight significance that most persons would examine the very spot itself, without seeing anything out of the way in it. It is this: the hem around the mouth of the bag contains two seams, one on each side, where the sack is sewn together. One of these seams is ripped open, on the *inside* of the sack, thus leaving a small opening, just large enough to enable the medium to insert his finger and reach the draw-string. As the seam on the other side is necessarily ripped open, on the outside, to enable the tape to be threaded through it, the open seam is not liable to arouse suspicion, even if it is noticed. It will probably be taken as a matter of course — a part of the construction of the bag. Some mediums, however, in order to obviate even this small risk, sew up this slit with cotton, in such a manner that, by catching hold of a large knot in the end of the thread, and pulling, the seam is immediately unsewn. That is all the trickery there is about the bag.

In the tying of the medium's hands there is no trickery at all, they being secured in a genuine and thorough manner. All the trickery takes place after the medium is placed in

the sack. The method of procedure I must now explain a little more in detail.

As soon as the medium is placed in the sack, and it is being gathered up about him, he places his hands on the mouth of the sack and assists the committeemen in pulling it up about him; the most natural thing in the world. What he really does, however, is to catch hold of the hem of the sack *just over the seam*, which is now in his hand, and he surreptitiously introduces the first finger of his right hand into this open seam and catches hold of the tape which runs round the mouth of the sack (*v.* Fig. XIV., p. 164). If the thread is there, it may easily be broken. In any case, the medium gets possession of the tape. Now, as the tape is being gathered together from the outside, by the committee, the medium pulls down a certain amount of slack of the tape inside the sack, and fastens it under a hook or button in his clothes, to prevent it slipping, as he will presently have use for his hands. It is obvious, now, that, when the medium releases this slack, the mouth of the sack can be pulled open sufficiently to allow the medium to escape therefrom, if he were not fastened in any other manner. The first part of the test is explained, at least.

When it comes to tying the hands, the medium resorts to a very simple device. He passes a *duplicate* set of tapes through the holes in the sack, and *these* are the tapes that are so carefully tied and sealed to the chair! The ends of these tapes, on the inside of the sack, are simply fastened around pieces of wood, this serving the double purpose of rendering the tapes more easily found and handled, and preventing them from being drawn through the holes altogether, which would expose the trick instantly. The medium's hands are, of course, free all the time, being merely impeded by the two pieces of tape tied around the wrists.

Before the medium is released from the sack, however, he takes occasion to cut off several inches of the tapes around his wrists, for otherwise these tapes would be much longer than they would be if the tapes had really been passed through the openings in the sack, for it must be remembered

that the tapes must be cut to enable the medium to emerge from the sack. There are several other minor precautions to be taken, but it is unnecessary to detail them here, as they will readily be discovered by any one performing the trick. Why the ropes do not in any way interfere with the manifestations is explained on p. 145.

Of late years, various mediums and magicians have devised methods of escaping from handcuffs of all kinds, one performer (Harry Houdini) having earned a tremendous reputation by his sensational escapes from handcuffs of every make and description, and by escaping from the cells of various prisons. Many persons who have witnessed the performance of Harry Houdini have doubtless thought that all those who went upon the stage were confederates, and only took up to the stage the special handcuffs of which the performer had duplicate keys. Were that the case, it would be a feeble trick indeed, and I may as well state, just here, that the handcuffs brought upon the stage, in Harry Houdini's act, are perfectly genuine, and the persons bringing them, most probably, unknown to the performer. But, if that is the case, how are the handcuffs opened? That is the question we are now about to consider.

I must begin by stating that I do not know the exact *modus operandi* of *all* Houdini's handcuff acts. He doubtless employs very much the methods described below, but I may frankly state that I am unable to explain his whole "act" in detail. However, it is hardly necessary to do so, since a general idea of the usual methods employed is all that is required in a book of this character.

There are many trick-handcuffs made, which the performer can employ in case no members of the audience come forward with handcuffs of their own. The cuffs may be "faked" in various ways, and the performer may be provided with keys that fit the locks. One make of such trick-handcuffs I described in *Mahatma*, Vol. III., No. IV., October, 1899. I quote the explanation, as it stands, asking my readers to bear in mind that it was written for a magazine

devoted to the interests of professional conjurers and is couched in the usual style of that magazine.

"The performer brings forward a pair of handcuffs, and allows any one in the audience to examine them. A gentleman is then selected to come upon the platform, and fasten the magician's or 'medium's' hands together, by means of the handcuffs. The cuffs are clasped round the wrists, and the juncture sealed with strips of sticking-plaster (marked, if desired) and sealing-wax. The cuffs are attached to his hands with tape, and the knots sealed. *The keyhole of the lock is also sealed.* If desired, the handcuffs can be fastened to the hand itself by strips of sticking-plaster, but this is rather unpleasant for the performer. He is now placed in the cabinet, when the usual manifestations take place.

"The explanation of this feat is, as usual, simplicity itself. The trick relies to a great extent on the 'bluff' of the performer, and drawing the attention of the audience to the cuffs and lock, when, in reality, the trick is in the *chain,* and this accounts for profuse sealing, etc., going on around the wrists, the point where one would naturally expect trickery. The links are all solid, with one exception, which is made after the style of the familiar key-ring, *i. e.*, the ring with two openings opposite each other, and the ring split round its outer circumference, so that the next link will have to make a complete circle between these two halves to enter the ring (*v.* Fig. XV., p. 164). The opening is on the inner side of the link, so that the next one effectually covers the small slit when in place, and unless specially lifted. As a further safeguard against detection, all the other links have a tiny groove cut in them, running around their circumference, both outside and inside.

"The handcuffs may be offered for examination, but special attention is called to the lock, sealing the keyhole, etc.; moreover, the faked link is exceedingly hard to open, and when the performer requires to do so, he uses a small iron wedge, for the purpose of opening the slit in the link. This once effected, it is an easy matter to slip the link on and off. The rest we leave to the reader."

In this test the medium does not actually release himself from the handcuffs, it will be noticed. All that happens is that certain manifestations take place, when the medium's hands are securely handcuffed behind his back. If the cuffs are actually unfastened, other measures are employed; and, since the cuffs are frequently unlocked, at the conclusion of the séance, and indeed often found to be *inter*locked, one in the other, it is obvious that the medium has actually opened the handcuffs in some manner, and has not merely slipped out of them. *How* they are unlocked is the mystery.

Several speculations were advanced as to the manner of this release, in *Mahatma*, Vol. V., Nos. 11 and 12, and Vol. VI., No. 1 (May, June, and July, 1902). It was stated that a sharp blow, if delivered in precisely the right place, would unfasten the lock if it were weak and of the " spring " variety. A straight piece of metal was found sufficient to unlock several regulation irons. But for the vast majority, keys were doubtless required, and it simply became a matter of finding the right key for each make of lock, and unfastening the irons with it.

This would appear to the average person an unending task, if not a perfectly hopeless one. Such, however, is by no means the case. There are only a few makes of handcuffs, and it is an easy matter to produce keys that will fit the majority of locks brought forward. The principal keys are the Beau Giant, Beau No. 2, Sing Sing, Bryns, Scotland Yard, Trenton Nos. 1 and 2, Harper, Tower, and Little Detective. The complete set, however, consists of forty-five different keys, and the performer who wishes to succeed every time will provide himself with the entire set. They may be bought from certain establishments for about $15. With these it will be possible to open almost any lock that may be brought upon the stage, though it must be remembered that the mere possession of the keys is only a part of the trick (I had almost said the smallest part), the principal factor being the ability to recognize, almost immediately the cuffs are taken in the hands, the key to try, in unlocking them, for it is obvious that the audience cannot be kept

waiting until the performer has tried all forty-five keys on every one of the locks; the ability to conceal the keys, in spite of the searching which is sometimes insisted upon; the ability to manipulate the keys and locks after the cuffs are on the wrists; the capacity for averting defeat; above all the manner in which the trick is presented, all these factors and many more figure in the presentation of the trick. But I cannot go into the detail of working the cuffs now. I shall merely mention a few methods of concealing the keys, and of reaching and using them, since these facts are of general interest in the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena.

Of course, if no searching is to be done, the performer's task is an easy one. His clothes will afford ample opportunity for the concealment of all the keys required. If the medium is to be searched, he ties up all the keys in a strip of flannel, they being all arranged in order, somewhat after the manner of the familiar pocket-toilet outfits, each key being inserted into its own proper pocket, in the flannel strip. Knowing their order, the medium can procure any one he pleases in the dark. This strip can be rolled up quite small, and concealed either about the medium's person, after the methods described on pp. 249-51, or hidden in the cabinet, or in some chair or other article of furniture which the performer can reach from the cabinet. The keys may also be concealed in the drapery, etc. But, in many cases, even this is not possible. Harry Houdini has been stripped entirely nude and searched by the police, in some of his "tests," and yet succeeded in escaping from the various handcuffs, manacles, etc., placed upon him, in that condition! I am unable to say exactly how he accomplished this: but I am inclined to think that he has some special make of skeleton-key which fits a number of different makes of locks, and that he conceals this key in his mouth or in his hair. I am not sure, however, that this is the true explanation. I merely offer it by way of suggestion.

In the securing and manipulation of the keys consists the real "hard work" of the trick. The teeth are very fre-

quently used in inserting the key, and in turning it, when once inserted. Or the key may be pushed into a crack in the cabinet, and the cuffs opened by pressing them on to it, and turning the hands and cuffs about the key. Again, the key may be held between the knees, or a loop of catgut may be passed under the foot, and around one end of the key, and by pulling on the cord the key may be forced around, and the cuffs opened. (It must be remembered that the majority of handcuff-keys have a *handle* like a corkscrew, and are not like regular keys). One of the simplest methods of obtaining the key, however, is to have it fastened to one corner of a handkerchief, the other end of which projects slightly from the pocket, and is reachable by either the fingers or the teeth.

But we have considered handcuffs at sufficient length, and I now pass on to a consideration of the various other ties and methods of securing the medium, being very brief, however, as these are rarely or never seen offered as mediumistic feats nowadays, being almost entirely limited to the stage. It must be remembered that all these tests *have* been offered as genuine spiritualistic phenomena, however, at one time or another. For that reason, a brief mention of them becomes necessary.

One such piece of apparatus is known as the "spirit collar." It consists of a steel or brass collar, which passes around the medium's neck, and is secured to a post by means of a chain and padlock. The committee do the locking, and keep the key in their possession. The trick is in the collar, one of the bolts of which is made to unscrew, the collar coming apart at the hinges. This bolt is screwed down very tightly, so that the collar may be examined without fear of detection. The medium uses a small wrench to unscrew the bolt.

Various bolts or staples are in use, these being fastened to a board, and the medium tied to them with ropes, etc. It is only necessary to give the bolt a twist to the right, when it comes apart, and the medium is free to produce the usual manifestations. At their conclusion, he replaces the half of

the bolt attached to his wrist, gives it a half-turn to the left, and he is ready for any amount of examination.

Trick-cabinets are often employed; one of these, a very ingenious affair, enables the medium to be locked within, and the cabinet to be entirely covered with a closely woven net, and yet the usual manifestations take place! The trick consists in the fact that the bottom of the cabinet comes out, and, as the wire netting is tacked to the bottom of the cabinet all the way round *on the outside*, it is obvious that the netting would in no wise hinder this. Various other cabinets, trunks, etc., have been invented, enabling the performer to escape therefrom in a remarkably short space of time, while the trunk or cabinet may be examined as minutely as desired both before and after the test, without fear of its secret being discovered.

Some mediums have also employed a specially constructed wire cage, in which they are fastened, this cage being subjected to the most minute examination desired. There are several makes of cages in use, the one principally employed enabling the medium to escape through an opening made by unscrewing three or more of the bars on one side of the cage.

Tests of the above nature always appeared to the writer to be so obviously conjuring tricks that he found it hard to conceive the view-point of one who found them anything else. The elaborate precautions would inevitably suggest trickery to any one who is at all familiar with the methods adopted by conjurers in order to achieve their results. The fact that no trickery is found, upon examination of the cabinet, cage, etc., does not prove that none exists — far from it. If the trick were so easily discoverable it would be very soon found out, and the medium discredited. The more elaborate the precautions, the more probable is it that fraud is practised.

This brings me to a final reflection. Instead of binding the medium with ropes, tapes, etc., and sealing them so profusely, suggest that the medium employ, instead, a simple piece of white thread, and see how quickly your offer is rejected! The medium knows that a simple tie of that descrip-

tion would be the hardest of all to escape from, without leaving signs of his having tampered with the threads, and would undoubtedly reject any such proposal. "A word to the wise!"

CHAPTER IX

"HOLDING TESTS"

BESIDES the many rope-ties, etc., described on pp. 143-85, there are numerous methods that have been devised for controlling the medium, and it need hardly be said that that person has found a way of escaping from every one of them without detection! Many investigators were not content with tying the medium in his cabinet, or fastening and padlocking him to his chair; they felt, very naturally, that, however conclusive such tests might appear to be, it would be far *more* conclusive to actually *hold* the medium with their own hands, while the manifestations were taking place, and accordingly demanded that these conditions be complied with: that the medium permit himself to be actually held by one or more of the sitters, during the course of the manifestations, and the medium, "to save his face," had to consent. Of course, as soon as these tests came into general use, the medium set to work to devise means of escaping from these holds, so that he might, in reality, produce the manifestations himself, as before, but still give to the sitter in control of his person the impression that he was still holding the medium securely. The means adopted were many and ingenious. I give the principal methods herewith, though it must always be borne in mind that, in tests of this character, "there are as many ways of escaping as there are mediums," each medium preferring one or more methods perfected by himself. The sketch given below can, therefore, only be general.

In the first place, it must be stated that the medium never

allows himself to be placed *absolutely* under control, *i. e.*, held in various places, by several sitters, at the same time, as an escape from such control would be an obvious impossibility. He may state that such a handling of his person, during the manifestations, would entirely "upset the conditions," as indeed it might if the phenomena were ever genuine (*v.* pp. 334-5). Certain "conditions" must be complied with, and one of these is that the body of the medium should not be placed under too close a supervision, but should have a certain amount of freedom and space round about it, which would be impossible if persons were directly in contact with the medium's body. He offers, however, to let the sitters hold his hands and feet, and even his head, during the manifestations; and, as they can only be produced, one would think, by the agency of the medium's limbs, this amount of control has always been considered satisfactory. That it is not so can readily be seen. All that is required, in the vast majority of cases, in order to produce the manifestations, is the free use of the medium's right hand: if he can succeed in releasing that, the rest will be an easy task, and it does not matter how closely his feet, and head, and remaining hand are held. The methods of release I shall describe later. For the present it is necessary to state that in the rarest cases only has this *complete* control of the medium's body been practised, the vast majority of "holding tests" only controlling the medium's hands; and I shall accordingly describe these simpler control tests and the methods of release therefrom *first*, working up, gradually, to the more complicated holds, where a greater part of the medium's body is under careful observation. I begin by describing a simple device often employed in "test circles," and explain the means employed by the medium to release himself from the control of his right and left-hand neighbors.

In this test, the medium and sitters form a circle around the table, all joining hands by placing their extended fingers in contact with those of their right and left-hand neighbors; *i. e.*, each member of the circle places his or her two hands

on the table, palm side down, and crosses his own thumbs. The extended little fingers of each hand are in contact with the little fingers of the sitters to the right and left hand, either holding or held by these sitters (*v.* Fig. XVI., p. 188). A complete circle is thus formed, in which there is no break. If the medium attempts to remove his finger, it will, apparently, be felt by the person holding that finger, or held by it. Thus trickery is impossible!

The medium frees his hand (say the right) in the following manner. Soon after the lights are turned out (for of course all these tests take place in the dark, unless otherwise stated), the medium is seized with a series of violent "twitches," or "spasms," which convulse his body. He is getting under control! The real object of these twitches, however, is to bring the medium's hands nearer together, until they are almost superimposed, the one over the other. Then, with an extra strong spasm, the medium jerks his hand away altogether, and it is free. This removal of the finger is felt, of course, by the right-hand sitter, and he would remark upon the fact were it not that he feels the finger again under his own the instant it is withdrawn. Only for the merest fraction of a second has he lost control of it; and now he feels it securely held again. No more twitchings follow until the medium comes out of the trance, when control is again lost for a brief moment. When the lights are again turned up, the medium is found to be securely held as at first, while the manifestations have taken place as usual.

As the acute reader will doubtless have guessed, the trick consists in substituting the *first* finger of the outstretched *left* hand the moment the right hand is withdrawn, and it is *this* finger that the sitter so carefully guards for the remainder of the séance (*v.* Fig. XVII., p. 188). It is really amusing. The right hand is free to produce any manifestations it pleases, and when the séance is ready to close, the medium is again "controlled," and the left finger is withdrawn with a jerk, and the little finger of the right substituted. The trick is now done.

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

Another plan, and a very satisfactory one, is the following, in which the sitter's two hands are held by the two hands of the medium, while the manifestations take place. Medium and sitter sit opposite one another, with their knees touching. The sitter now places his two hands on his knees, palms downward, and they are covered by the two hands of the medium. If he should remove either hand it is to be supposed that the sitter would know it, and expose him. The deception lies in the fact that the sitter does not get both the medium's hands on his, but has only one, turned so as to lie across both.

The medium accomplishes this, without detection, in the following manner. He makes a series of downward passes from the sitter's shoulders to his hands for some considerable time. At the end of this period of stroking (which, the medium asserts, is to induce " magnetic " currents), the medium turns his left hand so that it will cover both the sitter's hands, and allows it to rest lightly on them. The sitter now thinks that he has both hands, and will so state on being questioned. This is a test condition that gives general satisfaction, for no one is supposed to be so stupid that he cannot tell when a weight is removed from his hand. Yet he is!

A very clever release is the following. The medium seats himself in a chair, and places his two hands on his own knees, as the sitter did in the last test described. An investigator sits on either side of him. The sitter who is on the medium's right-hand side grasps his right wrist, while the medium himself grasps the left-hand sitter's wrist (*v.* Fig. XVIII., p. 190). This forms a circle, in which the medium is holding one sitter, with one of his own hands, and being held by another, on the other side, so that *that* hand cannot possibly be used to produce the manifestations, which ensue, nevertheless. This is a most convincing test, when well managed.

In order to release one hand (let us say the right) the medium resorts to the following device. Just after the light is turned out, the medium requests the right to remove his hand for a moment, in order to use his handkerchief. As

soon as he has done so, he apparently replaces his hand under the control of his right-hand sitter, but what he does in reality is this. He slips forward both his feet and crosses his knees, the left knee being on top. Then, when he requests his right-hand sitter to again catch hold of his wrist, he simply allows him to catch hold of his *left* wrist, the same one which is holding the wrist of his left-hand neighbor. His right hand is now free (*v.* Fig. XIX., p. 190). The left-hand neighbor cannot tell that the hand has moved, as indeed it has not. The right-hand sitter cannot tell that any change has taken place in the position of the hands, as he grasps a wrist, which the medium tells him is his right wrist, and he believes him. As there is only one knee, the trick cannot be discovered by either sitter feeling the other knee, and thus inferring that the medium had removed one hand.

A test sometimes employed is the following, which is given when the " magnetic conditions " do not permit actual contact with the medium during the manifestations; the real reason is that the medium desires the free use of both hands, probably. The medium undertakes to clap his two hands together, throughout the manifestations, thus showing that they have no part in their production. The trick consists in clapping one hand against the cheek or forehead while the other hand is busily engaged producing " phenomena."

Some sitters will tell you that manifestations took place in their presence when they *knew* that they held *both* the sitter's hands, they being grasped by separate hands, and held wide apart throughout the manifestations. This may very well be the case, and the methods were purely fraudulent, nevertheless! In order to produce a certain class of manifestations, when the hands are held in this manner, the medium provides himself with a long feather; this he conceals under his coat, in such a way that the quill-end will be readily accessible to his mouth. The hands are under control, and the sitter's eyes are bandaged, as this is one of the manifestations that may be produced in the light, — provided the sitter is blindfolded. Of course other sitters must not be present. At the end of a certain time (the waiting

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

is for effect), the medium grasps the feather in his teeth and, with it, caresses the sitter's head and face, the touches feeling like touches from tiny, soft fingers. This test is very convincing.

Another clever test may now be given to the same sitter, while the bandages are still on. Request your sitter to place both his hands upon your head. You now encircle his two arms with *your* left arm, and press heavily upon his left arm with the extended thumb and little finger of the left hand, saying, at the same time, " You feel both my hands upon your left arm? Keep close watch of me, that I do not take away either of them! " You will at once be able to remove your right hand, and produce any manifestations desired.

When there is a large circle of sitters, the medium may occasionally permit himself to be held as securely as the skeptic may desire, in such a way that escape or movement would be absolutely impossible, and this, while the unbroken chain of sitters extends round the table. In this case, the medium has present three confederates, who sit together. The two sitting on the right and left hand of the central confederate simply release their hold on his hands, and he is free to wander about the room as much as desired, and produce the most extraordinary manifestations. Once in awhile, the medium may employ this artifice to silence all doubting voices, allowing the most skeptical, on such occasions, to hold him. Needless to say these séances must be held in the dark.

There is a dodge sometimes employed by mediums to release the feet; or at least one foot. The medium and sitter sit at a table, opposite one another, and the medium requests the sitter to place his two feet on his (the medium's), and control them in that manner. The medium has, over the toes of his shoes, steel caps, made to fit exactly over the shoe, and blacked to match them. When the sitter places his feet on the toes of the medium, the latter has merely to withdraw his own feet, leaving the " caps " under the control of the sitter, and produce the manifestations desired.

When the medium undertakes to control the sitter's feet

instead, he simply places one foot across both the sitter's feet, as in the above experiment with the hands, this being very much easier, for the reason that the leather on the shoes would effectually prevent any nicety of feeling, and render the substitution an easy matter.

The method of releasing the hands employed by Eusapia Paladino, and exposed by Doctor Hodgson, at the famous "Cambridge Sittings" (pp. 12-13), was simply a variation of the test given on p. 190. The medium held one sitter's hand, and *was held by* the other sitter, on the other side. She merely withdrew one hand altogether, leaving her right-hand sitter in charge of the *same* hand that was *holding* her left-hand sitter's fingers. It was a clever piece of substitution. But the Paladino case I have discussed at some length on pp. 11-14.

Magicians have invented a very clever little piece of apparatus which enables the performer to produce manifestations while both his hands are in full view of the audience. A small table is brought forward, on which is placed a bell, tambourine, horn, slate, and the usual paraphernalia used in such tests. The medium, or performer, then shows a very large handkerchief, about a yard square, which may be examined. This he holds in front of the table, in full view of the sitters, and in the light, by its two upper corners, his two hands thus being visible. His head and legs are, of course, also visible. The manifestations ensue nevertheless, — bells ring, the tambourine is thumped, raps, in answer to questions are given, a message is found written on the slate, etc., and, most convincing of all, the horn toots!

The trick consists in the use of a simple piece of apparatus of which the audience knows nothing. It is a jointed steel rod, folding up to a couple of inches, or opening out to a yard or more, as may be desired. To one end of this rod is fastened a dummy wax hand (only the knuckles, they being all that would be visible in any case). This the medium has secreted about his person and only produces it under cover of the handkerchief. Holding one end of the rod in his left hand, he pulls out the rod to its fullest extent, the other end

of the handkerchief being secured to it by means of a bent pin. When extended, this rod will now keep the handkerchief taut, and the wax dummy will exactly resemble the back of the medium's right hand, which is, of course, free to produce the manifestations — ring the bell, rap, bang the tambourine, write the message on the slate, etc.

The only thing to be explained is the manner in which the horn is " tooted." As the medium's mouth is all the time visible, that would seem impossible to accomplish by trickery. And so it would be! The horn may be tooted in either one of two ways: either the performer's assistant toots *another* horn behind the scenes, the performer depending on the illusion of sound to pull him through; or the horn is connected to a rubber tube, which passes through the hollow table-leg, and a hole in the stage, into the mouth of an assistant below (*v.* p. 201).

It remains for me to describe the holding test made famous by the Eddy brothers, and which has doubtless deceived as many persons as any single test in the whole range of spiritualistic phenomena. They converted many persons to the belief, and they are two of the most important figures in the history of American spiritualism. For this reason it will be necessary for me to consider and describe their séance somewhat in detail.

The Eddy brothers' sittings were always held in the light, this being the convincing part to most persons, nor were the sitters blindfolded or otherwise hampered; they were free to make use of whatever powers of observation they possessed. The " cabinet " was erected in the corner of the room in the following manner. A curtain was pinned or otherwise fastened against the wall of the room, in the angle, this curtain containing several slits sufficiently long to enable a hand and arm to be thrust through them. Sometimes, however, this curtain was dispensed with, as the manifestations could be produced just as well without it. I shall accordingly describe a séance where the curtain is not used. The arrangements were simple. Three chairs were placed in the corner of the room, side by side, two investigators and the

medium sitting on them. The medium does not occupy the middle seat, however, as one might suppose, but the one to the left of the sitters in the cabinet, and to the right of the onlookers. The medium on the one side and the second sitter on the other now grasp the middle sitter's arms with their two hands, the right and left hand each taking a firm hold on the sitter's arm at different points, so that if either hand were removed, by either his right or his left hand neighbor, he would feel it instantly, and give the alarm. He is even requested to do this. A curtain is now pinned across the three sitters, being fastened to each of their breasts by means of pins, and attached just below the neck. This prevents the audience from seeing the medium or sitters in the cabinet from the neck down, though their heads are still visible. In the cabinet has previously been placed a table, on which is a bell, horn, tambourine, slate, etc. This is all the preparations that are required, and, as they are so simple, the spectators think that no trickery *can* be possible under such circumstances. Of course the manifestations take place as usual.

It will be seen that all the manifestations could be easily explained, if only the medium had the free use of his right hand, as all the instruments on the table would be within his reach, to manipulate as he pleased, if only that hand were free. The means employed to free that hand were many and varied. Sometimes the medium would merely extend the first and second fingers of his left hand, and, by degrees, transfer the pressure from the right to the left hand fingers. In this manner the right hand could be gradually released. This manœuvre, however, is always a risky one, and one liable to detection; and, as the sitter chosen for the middle seat is usually one of the skeptical, this device is rarely relied upon, but another and surer plan followed.

The medium has, concealed in his right hand, a piece of sheet lead about two inches square. This he has palmed. Now, when he places his right hand over the arm of the sitter, he simply bends this piece of lead round the arm of his victim, and he is then free to remove his hand at any

time without fear of detection. The sitter cannot see what goes on inside the cabinet, owing to the arrangement of the curtain, and the weight of the lead gives him the impression that the medium's hand is still holding his arm. The illusion is almost perfect.

Almost! In order to render the illusion *quite* perfect, however, a further improvement was made. A spring clasp was used, to each end of which was soldered a portion of a hand, the thumb on one end and the four fingers on the other. These were made of rubber, and, when the spring clip was opened, and the fingers and thumb clasped on opposite sides of the arm, the illusion was perfect.

And that is the whole secret of the marvellous Eddy brothers' performance, or "séance!" The whole trick is so absurdly simple that it seems incredible that intelligent people should have been deceived by it for an instant. The medium produces whatever manifestations he desires; rings bells, etc., and shows his own hands or stuffed gloves on the end of his telescopic rod, as described on p. 196. If, by any chance, the table has been placed beyond the medium's reach, he can, nevertheless, obtain possession of any of the articles thereon by the same means — the telescopic rod. The methods of producing several hands of different sizes at the same moment (which many persons who attended the Eddy brothers' séances will doubtless state they saw, and rightly) are described on p. 248.

CHAPTER X

MISCELLANEOUS PHYSICAL TESTS

We must now pass on to consider certain "physical tests" pure and simple, meaning by this, those tests in which certain *intelligent* phenomena take place, not discussed in the chapters on table-turning, raps, etc., and consisting chiefly in the playing of musical instruments, under conditions which render it impossible (apparently) for the medium to play the instruments or produce the witnessed phenomena himself.

Before proceeding to do so, however, I must describe a little piece of apparatus in very general use among mediums, and one that may be used for many purposes. It is a little rod made of steel, which slides or "telescopes" together, forming either a long, slender rod when folded up, looking very like a slate-pencil (indeed, it may be disguised as such), or into a thicker and more compact mass about two inches in length. Both of these rods, when opened out, measure about three feet. The rod is hollow (which fact is taken advantage of in such tests as that described on p. 248), and is provided with a hook at its small or distant end, this being used to lift the musical instruments, convey them from one place to another, etc.

Instead of this telescopic rod, some mediums employ a little instrument known as the "lazy tongs." These are made of steel, and are a number of rods, pivoted together in the middle, so as to form a series of X's, — two corners of which are fastened to two corners of the X's next to them, so that the entire apparatus may shut up into a very small

space, or may be extended over a very large one. The two end arms have, attached to them, a sort of grip or clasp, which will hold any piece of apparatus it closes upon, when the tongs are extended their full length.

These rods may be used for a variety of purposes, one of the most obvious being the securing of objects beyond the medium's reach, and the displaying of these articles in places where the medium, tied as he is, could not possibly be. The use of this little instrument in displaying "materialized hands," etc., will be dealt with on pp. 245-8. Another very obvious use to which the rod may be put is to produce writing on the ceiling, etc., when the medium is "levitated," supposedly (*v.* p. 383). This is a very old trick, and one now well known.

One use to which this rod may be put is the floating of a guitar or other musical instrument about the room, over the sitters' heads, in a dark séance. A guitar is frequently used for tests of this character, and, when this is the case, the guitar has, bored in its neck, a small hole, just large enough to admit the end of the above-mentioned rod, when extended. Inside the guitar, which is specially constructed, is a small music-box, which may be wound up, and set in motion by merely releasing a catch spring. When the séance is in full swing, the medium gains possession of this guitar, inserts the rod into the hole in the neck of the instrument, sets the machinery going, and waves the guitar about over the sitters' heads, when they will have presented to them the strange phenomenon of a guitar floating in the air, and performing a tune upon itself! It does not sound exactly as though the music were produced on the strings; but it is near enough for the illusion to pass, under the circumstances. At any rate, the music has never been challenged, to my knowledge.

The guitar I have just described may be used for a variety of purposes, and I shall mention it again in the chapter on "materialization."

The author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium* describes the following very ingenious test, in which the medium gets possession of, and plays upon a guitar, when both

his hands are held by different persons, and where his handling of the instrument is consequently out of the question. It is this:

"Place in your dining-room an oval table, and on it place a guitar, tea-bell, and a tambourine from which the head has been cut. In your top vest pocket place a long lead-pencil. Now, seat your sitters around the table, and have them clasp each the other's hands, including your own. Seat yourself so that the end of the neck of the guitar is lying toward you and quite close to the edge of the table. Have the tambourine close to your edge of the table, while the bell can be placed anywhere. Make the room perfectly dark, and begin operations by catching the edge of the tambourine frame in your teeth, and by leaning well back, put it over your head. It will settle down around your neck. Now draw the neck of the guitar out over the edge of the table and, by leaning forward, the tambourine about your neck will hang down so as to allow you to get the neck of the guitar through it a few inches. On straightening up, you will find that the guitar will bind against the ring and your chest so that it will rise from the table. It lay on its back on the table and the strings must be on the side toward you. Now take the pencil between your teeth and proceed to 'thrum' the guitar. By moving it about, your sitters will think it is moving around the room. In order to disguise your movements, in causing the manifestations, you will find the jumping and jerking tactics of all mediums to quite effectually fill the bill" (pp. 313-14).

There are various music-boxes, too, which play or stop at the performer's command, and some of these have been imported into the séance-room, and the effects attributed to spirit agency! Doctor Monck had a music-box of the character described below, and it greatly enhanced his reputation until his exposure, when the whole affair, — the method of working the trick, — was brought to light. I shall first of all describe a music-box, devised by Mr. Maskelyne, of London. In this case, the music-box is shown and suspended in the middle of the room by placing it on a plate glass shelf,

which is itself suspended by four chains or ribbons, one from each corner. The music-box plays or stops at command. The secret lies chiefly in the construction of the box. A light shaft, delicately pivoted, is arranged so as to just interfere with the fly-wheel, when the box is resting on any flat surface. When, however, the box is tilted slightly forward or backward, this shaft is displaced, and the fly-wheel is free, thus starting the music. The chains that support the plate glass, on which the box rests, are under the control of an assistant, and he can accordingly raise or lower the rear end of the glass by raising or lowering these chains an almost imperceptible degree. This serves to start the music-box, however, which is all that is required.

The test employed by Doctor Monck was of a different character. He would place a music-box on the table, and cover it with a cigar box, or other box, and the sitters were at liberty to keep their hands upon this throughout the sitting. Nevertheless the music-box played at command, though the box and table could be examined, and the medium's hands were held.

This effect was produced by the aid of a *second* music-box, playing the same airs as the first, and attached to the leg of the medium, just above the bend of the knee, within the trouser. When not in use the box rested beneath the knee, but when required for action it was brought around to the front of the leg, resting above the knee. The box was so arranged that pressure on a stud at the top caused it to play, the music immediately ceasing when such pressure was removed. Of course the box on the top of the table is silent throughout, the music being under the perfect control of the medium.

The accordion test has been rendered famous chiefly because it was one of the phenomena produced in Sir William Crookes's presence through the mediumship of D. D. Home. I have discussed this test on pp. 374-7, giving my reasons for thinking that the test was not produced by any such means at those particular sittings. In the present chapter I shall

describe the various means that are employed to cause the accordion to play by itself, when trickery *is* employed.

One method of working the trick is for the medium to take hold of the accordion in his right hand (his left being held by a sitter above the table) at the end opposite that on which are the keys of the instrument. The notes are now at the end farthest away from him, in which position they are supposed to be throughout the séance. The accordion plays nevertheless, and, at the conclusion of the séance, it is brought up in the same position in which it was placed under the table. The trick is simple enough. In the act of placing the accordion under the table, the medium turned it end for end, so that the end with the keys or notes is now in his hand, and the strap end hanging downward. This lower end the medium grasps between his knees, and, by flexing his wrist strongly, he can play the instrument after a fashion, which is all that is required. Before the accordion is brought up again, the medium is careful to reverse the ends, so that the end containing the notes again hangs downward, as at first. A variation of working this trick is for the medium to have concealed about him a loop of catgut, to which is attached a small sharp hook. The loop is produced by the medium, under cover of the table, and passed under the foot. The hook is now inserted into a small iron "eye" in the lower end of the accordion, and the medium may pull against this in producing a certain number of notes from the instrument.

If the accordion is tied and sealed the medium can still produce music therefrom, provided a dark séance be allowed. He simply attaches a rubber tube to the air-hole or valve and blows into the other end of this tube. His lungs take the place of bellows.

There are mediums known as "trumpet mediums," whose specialty is the production of voices, etc., through a trumpet, these voices often being recognized by sitters as characteristic of their departed friends, as giving information previously unknown to them, etc. This latter aspect of the problem I shall not stop to discuss now, but shall confine my-

self to the actual voices, and the various methods of producing them.

In the vast majority of cases, the trumpet talking is done by the medium himself. If the séance is in the dark, the medium's task is an easy one, he having only to wave the trumpet about and imitate whatever voices he desires. By attaching the trumpet to the end of the telescopic rod mentioned on p. 196, and moving this about, voices can be made to appear in various parts of the room at will. Sometimes the trumpet is partly in sight, when the room is only partially darkened, and yet the voices come. This is accomplished by a small piece of rubber tubing being attached to the mouth of the horn, and the medium speaks into the other end of this tube. The voice appears to issue from the horn. At other times the medium employs a *second* trumpet, speaking into that, and it is almost impossible to distinguish the difference by locating the sound (*v.* p. 101, etc.). At other times the medium consents to be held by two sitters while the horn is doing the talking. When this is the case, the medium generally has a confederate, who manipulates the horn, does the talking, etc.

Sometimes these séances are given "in the light," *i. e.*, in dim twilight. In these cases, the horn is laid on the floor of the room, and the voices issue therefrom as before. The trick consists in the fact that a rubber tube connects the end of the horn with a confederate's mouth, he being hidden in the cellar below, and he it is who does the talking. When the medium gives these séances in his own house, an elaborate arrangement of speaking-tubes is employed, rendering a magnificent test séance possible.

There are also horn tests in which an ordinary horn is simply "tooted," but under conditions that render it impossible, supposedly, for the medium to get at and manipulate the horn. If the horn is out of reach, it may be secured by means of the telescopic rod, spoken of at the commencement of this chapter. Sounds may be produced in various parts of the room, beyond the reach of the medium, by means of the same instrument; the horn is fitted into the end of the rod,

and the medium blows through the hollow tube thus formed, waving the rod about, all the time, in various directions.

The chief tests, however, are the following. The medium is requested to fill his mouth with water, and to spit this water out again at the conclusion of the séance, thus proving that *he* did not do the "tooting."

The methods of "getting around" this test, to use the language employed by the professional medium, are numerous. The medium may attach a miniature pair of bellows to the horn, and may blow through it in that manner. Again, he may place the horn in his nose, and blow through it; or the medium may attach a rubber ball to the horn, and squeeze that, thus producing sounds of a more or less certain character. Lastly, the medium may simply *swallow* the water, blow the horn in the regular manner, and, at the conclusion of the séance, refill his mouth from a bottle concealed in one of his pockets.

An investigator once suspected the manner in which the medium did this trick, and, just before the séance commenced, he came forward, with a glass of *wine*, which he insisted the medium should hold in his mouth during the manifestations. The medium agreed. The horn "tooted" its loudest, and, at the conclusion of the séance, the medium ejected the wine from his mouth, leaving the investigator to wonder what *did* do the "tooting" on that particular occasion anyway! The medium had taken one of the tea-bells, inverted it, held it firmly by the handle between his knees, and emptied the wine from his mouth into it. At the conclusion of the séance, he had merely to take this wine into his mouth again, and — *voilà tout!*

Magicians have invented various miniature "spirit-cabinets" in which the usual manifestations take place on a small scale. These cabinets are about three feet wide, by three high, by one deep. The performer stands outside the cabinet, and the manifestations take place within it — the ringing of bells, the "tooting" of horns, etc. There are two varieties of cabinet in use; one, a very simple one, in which a black silk thread is stretched across the stage, from

side to side, the two ends being in the hands of assistants. The bell, tambourine, etc., have small hooks attached to them, and the performer is careful to place these hooks over the thread in placing the instruments into the cabinet. The slate, on which a message is apparently written, is a trick-slate, the one described on pp. 91-2. A full account of the method of working this cabinet will be found in *Mahatma*, Vol. VII., No. 6 (December, 1903).

In the case of the other class of cabinet, there is a small boy concealed behind it, he being on a shelf which is supported by fine wires, counter-weights being affixed to the other end of these wires. As the cabinet itself has previously been taken to pieces, and rests on a sheet of glass, supported on the backs of two slight chairs, it seems impossible that any one can be concealed behind it, without breaking the glass. This trick involves quite a lot of stage mechanism, and the full explanation cannot be attempted here. It will be found in Hopkins's *Magic, Stage Illusions*, etc., pp. 35-7.

One very clever trick remains to be described, for the secret of which I am indebted to Mr. E. D. Lunt, of Boston. It consists in turning the sitter's waistcoat inside out, while the coat is still on his back, and while the sitter's hands are tied securely together behind his back. No confederate is employed, and there is no trick about the waistcoat. The medium blindfolds the sitter, takes him into the cabinet with him, and, in a very short space of time, brings him forward with his vest turned inside out! The sitter's hands are examined and are found to be still firmly tied together behind his back, and the knots sealed.

This test is performed in the following manner. The medium steps behind the sitter and quickly unbuttons his coat and vest (from the pockets of which all articles should previously have been removed, as "the spirits" are sometimes rather rough on the clothes!). The medium now pulls the coat backward over the arms and on to the hands, which are tied together. The vest is next pulled down backward in precisely the same manner as the coat, over which it now hangs. The entire coat is then pulled through the armhole

on the button side of the vest (the right), and is pulled up the right arm, where it is left for a minute. The vest is now on the left arm, with the buttonhole side nearest the left shoulder. Now take hold of the lowest corner of the *button* side of the vest (the right) and carry it round and through the armhole on the button*hole* side of the vest, pulling it through as far as it will go. Next take hold of the lowest left-hand corner of the vest (the buttonhole side), and pull that also through the same armhole, when it will be found that the vest is really turned inside out. It is, however, still on the left arm. The vest is pulled down to the wrists, and the coat passed back through the armhole on the side nearest to it, so as to bring the vest outside the coat as at first. All that now remains to be done is to pull up the waistcoat over the back of the sitter, then the coat, and the trick is done. By practice, this can be done in a remarkably short time, though the description may sound very complicated.

A brief mention should be made of the performance of Mrs. Abbott, who accomplished feats apparently far beyond her strength, such as lifting a man sitting on the top of a billiard cue, while several other men were also attempting to hold it down; placing the tips of her fingers against the wall, and a line of several strong men was unable to push her against the wall; placing herself in such a "condition" that the strongest man in the audience could not lift her from the floor, etc. The medium herself put the effects down to a sort of "magnetism," but it was readily proved that they were all dependent upon certain well-known laws of mechanics, she taking advantage of them for her performance. I could explain her performance in detail, but refrain from doing so, for the reason that exposés of her performance have been published so frequently before. I refer the interested reader to a book entitled *Lulu Hurst: Revelations of the Georgia Magnet;* to pp. 157-65 of the *Revelations of a Spirit Medium;* to pp. 274-88 of *The Supernatural?* by L. A. Weatherly and J. N. Maskelyne; to Mr. Myers's paper "Resolute Credulity" in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XI., pp. 219-25 (containing exposés of the performance,

and explanations thereof by Sir O. J. Lodge, Prof. James H. Hyslop, Dr. R. Hodgson, the Rev. Solon Laner, etc.); to *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. V., pp. 168-9, etc. Further criticism is hardly necessary.

CHAPTER XI

SPIRIT - PHOTOGRAPHY

The whole history of modern spiritualism has probably contained no more bitter contests than have arisen over this question of the possibility and the reality of "spirit-photographs;" of those photographs, that is, on which appear a face, or a number of faces (as the case may be), of departed friends or relatives of the sitter, on the same plate upon which was taken the photograph of the flesh and blood sitter himself. The individual merely sits and is taken just as in any case, apparently; but, when the plate comes to be developed, lo and behold! upon it are observed one or more "spirit" faces. The question is: how did those faces get there? Are they the result of some trick in the printing or developing of the plates; or are they the real photographs of genuine spirits, sufficiently materialized for the time being to impress the sensitive plate of the photographer, though invisible to the gross physical eye? The scientific and skeptical world holds to the former of these opinions; the spiritualistic world to the latter. It should be obvious that this question cannot be settled by *a priori* considerations alone, but must be settled by an appeal to *facts*. To these facts I accordingly turn, reserving the theoretic discussion for a later page.

That these spirit-photographs can be produced by trickery no one doubts who is acquainted with the evidence and the facts in the case. Granting that the medium is free to manipulate the plates before, during, and after the séance, or at any *one* of these times, it is well known that he is able to produce exact reproductions of supposedly spirit forms

by purely fraudulent means. The question is, therefore, are the conditions such as to preclude the possibility of any substitution or manipulation of the plates by the medium? If the conditions are *not* exact enough to preclude this, then the evidence is obviously worthless, from the scientific point of view, for the scientist would very naturally insist that all fraud be excluded before he will consider the evidence for, and the nature of, this astonishing fact, if fact it be. The whole question is one of *perfection of the conditions imposed.* The actual methods of trickery that are possible, the means employed to trick the unwary, in this field, will presently be detailed; for the moment, I wish to consider, very briefly, the historical evidence in the case, and to see what support is afforded the claims of the spiritualists by the past evidence — this being simply an appeal to facts.

Going back no further than the *Report* of the Seybert Commission, we find that this committee was unable to procure the services of any medium at that time who would give séances for the production of spirit-photography under conditions that were in any way satisfactory, or even that did not point to obvious fraud, as the motive of the so-called "conditions" demanded. W. M. Keeler demanded, *e. g.*, the "exclusive use of the dark room and my own instrument" (p. 91), conditions which were, as Doctor Furness pointed out, "simply silly." The conditions insisted upon were such as to render fraud of the most transparent kind the simplest thing in the world. No other mediums, however, volunteered to give séances under any better conditions, and the matter was accordingly dropped.

Cases of spirit-photographs being obtained under apparently good "test conditions" continued to be printed in various spiritualistic journals, however, though the character of most of the evidence is exceedingly poor to any one going through it with critical care, and in spite of the fact that the investigations of the S. P. R. and many other individuals failed to bring to light any conclusive, positive facts in support of the evidence there accumulated. The deadlock was finally disposed of, and matters brought to a head, by the

publication, in *The Arena* (January, 1891), of an article by Dr. A. R. Wallace, "Are There Objective Apparitions?" which essay was afterward bound up in the later edition of his *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 231-54. Doctor Wallace contended that apparitions are occasionally objective realities, and not invariably subjective hallucinations, and appealed to five classes of facts to support him in his position. These are: (1) The fact that these phantoms are sometimes seen by two or more persons at the same time; the "collective hallucinations" of the psychical researcher. (2) The fact that these phantoms, when thus seen by two individuals, from different points of space, appear to differ in the relation to the individual, just as a real figure would differ. (3) The fact that dogs and other domestic animals are often reported to act as if they were aware of the presence of a figure. (4) The fact that phantoms sometimes (apparently, at least) produce real, physical effects in the material world, thus proving their objective reality, apart from the mind of the seer; and (5), the fact that these apparitions, or phantoms, can be occasionally *photographed*. We are not concerned at present with any aspect of the problem, save that of the evidence for spirit-photography. The real evidence presented in Doctor Wallace's book is certainly as inconclusive as possible, but Doctor Wallace, no doubt, would assert that the cases cited are merely *samples*, and are not intended to be convincing in themselves. Let us admit all that. The question now became one of historic research, of examination of cases, and a study of the methods and records of the principal mediums, who were at one time or another known to the spiritualistic world as "mediums who could produce spirit-photographs."

Obviously this task was a very laborious one. It was, nevertheless, undertaken by Mrs. Sidgwick, and the results of her researches given to the world in the form of a magnificent paper, "On Spirit Photographs," published in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. VII., pp. 268-89. In this article, Mrs. Sidgwick examined the records of Mumler, Hudson, Parkes, and Buguet (the four principal mediums engaged in

the production of spirit-photographs), and showed that the evidence was not only absolutely inconclusive in all their cases, but that gross and constant fraud had been charged against every one of these mediums and conclusively proved to exist. So far as the historical evidence went, then, professional mediums certainly could not be said to establish anything beyond a healthy doubt in the investigator's mind that such phenomena were ever genuine. Mrs. Sidgwick then offers some very sane and valuable remarks on the recognition of friends, relatives, etc., in these photographs, showing how difficult a thing it is to conclusively establish the identity of any person on such evidence, and the nature of the extreme uncertainty in these cases, owing to the possibilities of fraud, mistaken identity, etc. Finally, Mrs. Sidgwick examined a number of cases in which spirit-photographs had been apparently produced on an ordinary plate, when *no* professional medium had been employed. Her conclusion was that, either because of the nature of the spirit face produced (this often being only a mere blur on the plate), or the conditions of light, etc., under which the photograph was taken, or because of lack of sufficient detail in the description, or for other reasons it would be too tedious to enter into here, the evidence was inconclusive, to that date, and did not by any means prove spirit-photography to be a reality, or even a plausible possibility. I would refer all interested to the *Report* itself, since no mere summing up can suffice to do it justice. I also refer them to Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 117-25.

Of late years, one or two cases have been recorded which require careful examination. Some of the most remarkable of these cases are recorded in Dr. I. K. Funk's *The Widow's Mite*, etc., pp. 451-84. I cannot now discuss these cases in detail without the evidence being before the reader. The cases are certainly most striking, though to my mind not conclusive. They rest almost entirely on the reliability of the witnesses, and, although there is not the slightest reason for doubting their integrity, still, evidence of this character, so long as the *physical possibility* is present, will never convince

the scientific world, and rightly. It is the case of William Stainton Moses over again!

The other case to which I refer is remarkable also, though in a little different way. This case was published in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XIV., pp. 234-9, and discussed at great length in the Society's *Journal* (Vol. IX.; also in Vol. VII., pp. 165-71). In this case, the camera was exposed and left for some considerable time in that manner, an "interior" being taken. When the plate came to be developed, it was found to contain a figure seated in an empty chair, facing the camera, and, to make matters more interesting, it was afterward ascertained that this figure bore a resemblance to Lord D——, the owner of D—— Hall (the library of which was being photographed), and that the Lord D—— had actually died on that day, unknown to the person taking the photograph! The case, though most interesting, is scientifically inconclusive, for the reason that the camera was left unprotected for some time; and, though it was never *proved* that any person had entered the room in the interval, its *possibility* causes us to reject this case, on the grounds of "Not proven."

There are few, probably, who would deny the scientific *possibility* of such a thing as "spirit-photography," on *a priori* grounds alone. The cases of alleged materialization, the cases of apparitions, and kindred phenomena, cause us to suspect that, some day, spirit-photography may be a possibility, if many of the alleged phenomena of psychical research have any basis in fact at all. In any case it is no good to deny the possibility of such phenomena, since the phenomena, if real, can some day be *proved* to exist, and thus settle all *a priori* speculations in the matter at once. These are useless in work such as psychical research, in any case (*v.* pp. 332-3, etc.). The recent cases of alleged "thought-photography," though doubtless inconclusive, are still interesting and suggestive enough to induce us to keep an open mind in this direction, and not to be too dogmatic, either for or against. While the historic evidence in the case is certainly inconclusive, as stated, there is sufficient

evidence in it of the supernormal to warrant our continued search in that direction, with the hope that, some day, genuine phenomena may be obtained. With these remarks I shall pass on to consider the methods that are employed by the medium, in order to produce these photographs by fraudulent means, and the tests that should be applied in order to offset the medium's attempts at trickery and deception.

There are many ways in which spirit forms may be made to appear on the sensitive plate, and I shall briefly describe some of them. The following very excellent account of a number of methods that are employed appeared in a magazine a number of years ago, and is well worth quoting at some length. It reads, in part, as follows:

"In order to give our readers some idea of the method in which these frauds are practised, it will be necessary to describe a part of the ordinary process of photography. The most important preparation of the glass plate for the negative is termed 'sensitizing,' and is effected as follows:[1] The operator, holding the clean glass plate horizontally on his left hand, carefully pours over it sufficient collodion, a preparation of guncotton dissolved in a mixture of ether and alcohol, to cover the whole surface, and leave thereon a thin, transparent film, when poured off. When this coating has settled to a gummy consistency, it is placed on an instrument called a 'dipper' — a species of hook made of glass, porcelain, or rubber — and deposited in a bath, containing a solution of nitrate of silver, where it is left for perhaps two minutes. The bath is generally a vertical glass vessel, flat-sided like a pocket-flask, but uncovered. The plate is so placed in the bath that no portion of the collodionized surface touches the sides of the vessel. When the plate is lifted out of the dipper, its face is covered with a creamy,

[1] I have purposely preserved the original form of this paper (though, of course, many of the methods the author describes are now obsolete), for the reason that the older spirit-photographers worked under just the conditions described, and hence the description is probably accurate of the conditions *at that time*. The newer methods are exposed later on in this chapter.

opaque film, and it is then fully sensitized, that is, prepared to receive impressions through the camera. This preparation must be completed in the dark room, inasmuch as the plate is more or less sensitive from the moment of entering the bath, and exposure to the light would ruin it. The ensuing part of the process, including the placing of the plate in the dark slide, and carrying it to the camera, focusing, exposing, and returning the plate to the dark room, has been witnessed by most people who have had a picture taken.

"After returning to the dark room, the operator takes the plate from the slide, and pours over the surface, still covered with the white, sensitive film, a solution of iron, called, in photographic technology, the 'developer.' This iron precipitates the silver; here and there the creamy white of the film fades away, the black shadows come forth, and the picture grows out from the pallid surface, first in pale shadows, which ultimately develop to strong reliefs of black and white, like the shadows of a wizard's mirror. The plate is liable to impressions from the moment in the nitrate of silver bath, until the development of the picture is complete, so that at any immediate stage of the negative-making process, it is possible to produce 'ghosts' on the picture, as we shall shortly explain. But even after the negative is made there are large opportunities for ghost-manufacture during the making of the positive, which is printed from the negative on albumenized paper, rendered sensitive to light by immersion in a nitrate of silver solution. The sunlight, acting through the glass negative on the sensitive paper, makes the positive picture on the card photograph. There is considerable opportunity for humbug during the operation of 'retouching' the negative before printing. The term 'retouching' covers a multitude of means by which smoothness, clearness, transparency of shadows, strength of color, etc., are given to prints, freckles removed, boils eliminated, scars obliterated, beauty bestowed, and the original of the portrait gracefully flattered to his heart's content. Further description of the process will not be essential to our purpose of showing that in the dark room, before exposure, in the

DR. RICHARD HODGSON

A "spirit-photograph" which Dr. Hodgson had taken in order to show that a face may be made to appear over jewelry, as the result of fraudulent manipulation of the plates. Spiritualists have frequently asserted this to be impossible — unless the "spirit" be genuine. It will be observed that the face, in this instance, appears over the watch-chain.

opening during exposure, in the development of the negative, in the retouching of the negative, and in printing of the negative, fraud may be successfully practised by spirit-mongers. . . . Now for the process of ghost-manufacture!

"The plate upon which the negative has been made may subsequently serve for scores of others, if carefully washed, and in all photograph galleries numbers of old negatives are washed out from time to time, and used afresh. The washing must be very thorough, else the old impression will come out faint and misty with the new one. It is consequently a common expression in photograph galleries, 'Wash those plates cleaner, old impressions are coming out.' Well, some eastern photographer had at one time lying in his dark room an old negative of a picture resembling a fair girl in her snowy bridal dress, fleecy veil, and fresh orange blossoms, — at least, we will so suppose. The dust of years had noiselessly enveloped the old negative with its ashy molecules; the bridal dress had passed in fragments into the grimy bags of some great rag-merchant, and the very memory of the wearer had passed away like the fragrance of her bridal flowers, from the musk-haunted atmosphere of fashionable society. So there was no more use for the old negative, and they made a boy wash it out. The glass was freed from dust and film, and the shadowy presence that had dwelt there; and the sunshine sparkled through it as through crystal. And it came to pass ere long that a bearded man came to have his picture taken; and when it was developed by the strange magic of chemistry, behold the shadow picture had returned, fainter indeed, but still lovely; and it floated in pale light behind the figure of the bearded stranger. Probably the careless apprentice was scolded for his carelessness, and a new plate procured; but the strange picture haunted by the gentle shadow, all in diaphanous robes of samite, and wreathed with ghostly flowers, was preserved by reason of its weird beauty. And one day the junior partner of the firm, while gazing at it, suddenly slapped his thigh, and cried aloud, 'By G—d, Jim, let's go into the spirit-manufacturing business!'

"By imperfect cleansing of the plates the most eerie effects can be produced. About a year and a half ago a poor Indiana photographer created a tremendous sensation by the production of spirit-photographs in this manner, his success being in great part owing to the skill of a shrewd retoucher in his employ, who utilized the shadows of dead negatives in a truly admirable manner. The fellow might have made a fortune, had not the trickery been exposed a little too soon. The best of ———'s spirit-photographs seem to have been made by various modifications of this process, portions of the old negatives being thoroughly washed out so as to admit of proper adjustment. The knave's dupe is deceived by being allowed to handle and examine the apparently clean plate in the first instance, and afterward to follow it through all its peregrinations. Whenever the ghost impression is thus made, the spirit figure will appear behind the sitter, unless, indeed, the old impression be so strong as to affect the development of the new. In brief we may say that all ghost impressions made before exposure, that is, before the plate is exposed in the camera, will come out apparently in the rear of the living figure; and when the ghost figure is created subsequent to exposure, the spectre will seem to stand out in front of the person photographed. As the spectres at ———'s lair almost invariably stand in front of the sitter, we must conclude that the ghost impression is almost invariably made subsequent to exposure. This is not rendered any more likely, however, from the fact that ———'s patrons are requested to bring their own plates with them, and mark them carefully; for we have already shown that the fraud may be practised in the dark room after sensitizing, before exposure, after exposure, or during exposure.

"By the old method above described, by which both an old and a new impression are together developed from the same plate, it is far easier to make good ghost-pictures. Both the imperfectly washed-out ghost figure, and the fresh impression are negative impressions, and produce good positives in printing. But the figure of a ghost impressed upon

Imitation spirit-photo, done by F. W. Fallis, of Chicago, after investigating the process of R. N. Foster and wife, who claim to take spirit-photographs. Herein may be seen pictures of Maud Lord-Drake, John Slater, and J. Clegg Wright, as well as of other living persons (1888). For full exposé of Foster, see *Religio-Philosophical Journal.*

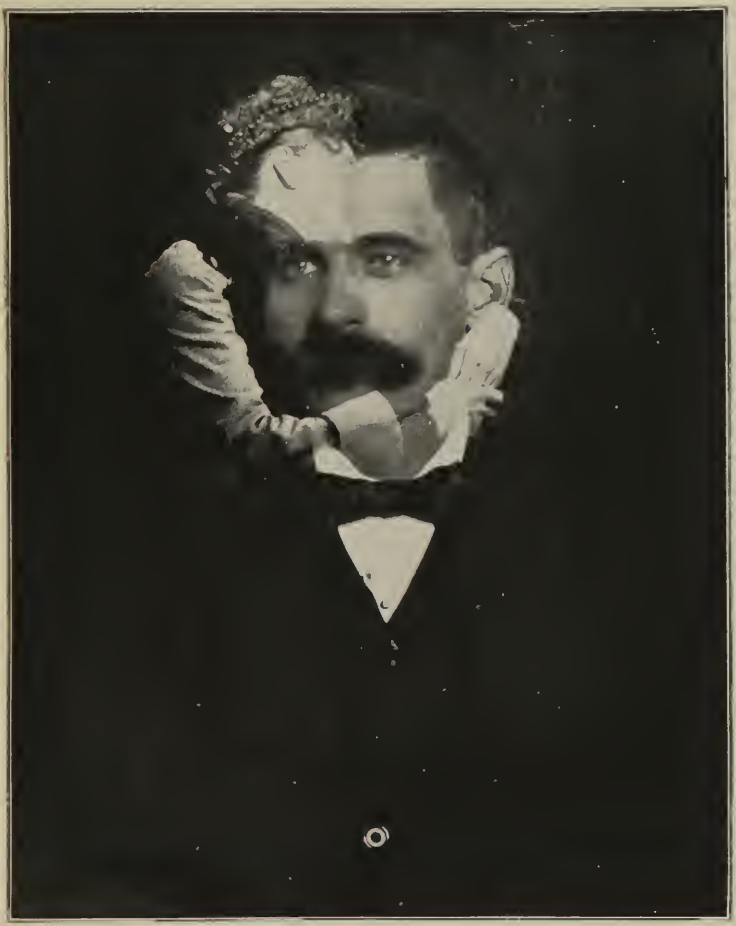
the sensitive plate by another negative, will produce a positive in development, and a negative in printing; so that, in the card photograph, the living picture would come out a positive, and the ghost as a negative. This will account for certain ghosts with black faces and white raiment, whose acquaintance we had the good fortune to make. Taking these things into consideration we must conclude that, when ——— produces ghosts subsequent to the preparation of the plate for exposure, the secret of his art lies in the manufacture of ghosts from 'transparent positives.' Thus the ghosts become negatives in the new picture; and both figures will be printed as positives. The operation requires great judgment in focusing.

"While the plate is in the bath, impressions may be made upon it which will remain unperceived until the exposure has been made and the plate developed. A well-known photographer was not long since bothered considerably by finding that every plate dipped into a certain nitrate of silver bath in his dark room came out in developing with the letters 'P. Smith' across the face of the picture. It was finally discovered that a ray of light, passing through a tiny crevice in the wall of the dark room, struck the side of the glass bath on which the name of the maker was stamped in relief, and the letters were thus impressed on the face of the sensitive plate. With a glass bath, and a concealed light, wonderful frauds in the spirit line can be practised, and, by placing a transparent positive between the light and the plate in the bath, splendid ghosts could be made, even while the dupe is looking on in the belief that he cannot be fooled! We might dilate at great length on this use of the bath, but it will not be necessary. After exposure, the plate may be returned to the bath for a short while without fear of injuring the impression, and the ghost figure then impressed upon it.

"Another method is to hold up the sensitive plate (either before or after operating) for one or two seconds before a jet of gaslight, in the dark room, or even before the yellow-paned glass, as though to examine the coating of the

plate, holding between it and the window or gaslight an old negative, transparent positive, or 'magic lantern transparency.' Two or three seconds will suffice for the clearest of impressions; and the looker-on would probably never dream of deception, supposing that the operator was examining the plate, 'to see if it was all right.' According to the distance between the two plates, the ghost figure will be stronger or fainter. We witnessed last Thursday a splendid operation of this kind at the Boston Gallery, in which two seconds sufficed for the production of a ghost figure by gaslight. By a clever device, the sensitive plate may be impressed with the figure of a ghost while in the dark slide, on the way to or from the operating-room, or even while in the camera itself. Indeed, twenty different varieties of deceptions may be practised without exposure. A common artifice is to place a microscopic picture within the camera-box, so that, by means of a small magnifying lens, its image may be thrown upon the plate. Spectral effects may also be produced by covering the back of a sensitive plate with pieces of cut paper, and using artifices well known to retouchers. . . . Extraordinary spectral effects, such as that of a man shaking hands with his own ghost, cutting off his own head, or followed by his own *doppelganger*, may be produced by 'masking,' a process which it would take too long to describe here. There is scarcely any conceivable absurdity in portraiture which may not be accomplished by the camera; and the peculiarities of the business are so extraordinary, the opportunities for humbug so excellent, and the methods and modifications of methods whereby spirit-photographs may be manufactured so numerous, that it is hopeless for any person totally ignorant of photography to detect a fellow like ——— in the act of fraud. Indeed, it often takes an expert in photography to detect certain cases of deception. Were we not limited by time and space in this article we could readily fill forty columns with an account of the many artifices practised by spirit-photographers."

In addition to the methods described so ably in the above article, there are several others now widely employed;



This photograph shows many interesting features. The general position is most extraordinary, but it bears marks of fraudulent manipulation; note especially the left hand, and the imperfect nose. The "spirit" is said to be the sitter's wife. This photograph was developed by the sitter himself.

the chief of these being undoubtedly that known as "double exposure." In this method, a confederate of the medium's is dressed up in the appropriate flowing robes that the spirits are supposed to wear, and the photographer uncovers the lens and "takes" the sitter just as in any other case, the only difference being that only about half the time-exposure is given, so that this figure, when the plate is developed, will appear dim, hazy, and indistinct, this hazy effect being somewhat heightened by taking the figure a little out of focus. This plate is then put aside, undeveloped, and when the real sitter arrives, his picture is taken on this *same* plate, the time-exposure being that normally given. The effect of this is to produce a photograph on which is visible, besides the portrait of the sitter, a dim, semi-transparent figure, which stands behind the sitter of flesh and blood, and which cannot be accounted for by any normal means! If the figure should, perchance, appear in *front* of the sitter, this has been accomplished by taking the sitter's photograph *first*, on a clean plate, and the spirit second, allowing a very short exposure. The general effect in both cases is very remarkable.

Still other methods that are sometimes employed are the following: A picture or portrait is painted on the "back-screen" with a solution of sulphate of quinine. When this dries, it will be quite invisible to the naked eye. When the photograph is taken, however, it will appear quite plainly on the plate.

Sometimes very small pictures are taken on thin, transparent celluloid, and these are fastened against the front lens of the camera. When the photograph is taken in the regular manner, these also appear on the plate.

Again, the spirit form can be printed first on the negative and then the living sitter by a second printing; or the spirit can be printed on the paper, and the sitter's portrait printed over it.

The above methods are not *all* those that are employed by fraudulent mediums in producing this class of manifestation; there are doubtless others of which I am ignorant; but the above will serve to show, at least, the varieties of fraud that

may be safely practised by mediums, in this line, and how impossible it is for the average person to detect fraud, when dealing with mediums who are experts. For example: the sitter may bring his own marked plates to the sitting, see them inserted in the camera, stand over the medium all the time the plates are being developed in the dark room, and take the plates home with him again, without any delay, and still be most outrageously swindled and cheated, right under his very eyes! The tricks of *this* trade can only be detected by an expert in photography, and one, too, who is thoroughly familiar with all the varieties of fraud that are practised by mediums, and who is thoroughly familiar with human nature, and the psychology of deception.

I shall conclude this section on spirit-photography by describing the methods practised by mediums to obtain spirit faces, and how it is that, when visiting a strange town, — which the sitter has perhaps never entered before in his life, — and visiting a spirit-photographer, portraits are obtained of the sitter's dead friends and relatives — that most convincing of all tests!

All those mediums who enter this branch of "spiritual work" make it their duty to provide themselves with small, pocket hand-cameras, those which will take a very small photo of an object when it is placed about one foot away from the camera. At every possible or conceivable opportunity, the medium extracts this camera from his pocket, and proceeds to copy the photograph of the person whose likeness he wishes to secure. These photographs can be procured either from the local photographer, or from an occasional family album, etc. The medium obtains a large number of these, especially of all prominent spiritualists, who are liable to have their photographs frequently taken for publication purposes. Needless to say, the medium may visit the prospective sitter and, if possible, obtain a photograph (as well as much other useful information) in the guise of a newspaper reporter. By hook or crook, then, the medium manages to obtain many of these photographs of spiritual-

In the above photograph, it will be noticed that several of the "spirits" are wearing helmets, caps, turbans, etc.

ists, and their families, relations, and friends, both living and dead. This information is used to good advantage by the medium when he turns public medium (which he does not do until later), and commences the business of the production of spirit-photographs. By printing a number of the miniature faces, obtained as described, on the negative, after one or other of the methods described, in various portions of the plate, the sitter will be surprised to see developed, together with his own portrait, distinct portraits of a number of dead relatives and friends of his, the faces being clear and easily recognizable! How this was accomplished is evident.

But how are we to explain those cases in which the sitter has, let us say, mailed his photograph to a spirit-medium living in a distant city, and who cannot be supposed to know anything of this individual, his dead friends and relatives, and who cannot be supposed to have any miniature photos or other information in his possession that would enable him to produce the spirit faces in the manner described? What then? In that case, the medium applied to writes to the medium living in the city where Mr. ——— also resides, and asks if he has anything in the way of tests for Mr. ———, giving the name. Of course he has, and forwards them. He gets one-half of the profits of the transaction for this, and the sitter is convinced, or, in the language of the mediums, "nailed to the cross."

It must not be forgotten that there is a sort of brotherhood among mediums throughout the country, enabling them to exchange information about sitters in this manner, to their mutual advantage and profit. As I have discussed this question at some length on pp. 312-18, however, I shall devote no more space to it now.

But suppose the sitter visits the medium in person, in some distant city, in which he is presumably unknown, and still obtains recognizable faces on the plate, what then? In this case, the spirit-photographer probably fails to procure any definite, recognizable faces the *first* sitting — only vague figures. He promises to try and do better next time, and

arranges to give another sitting later on. As, however, he is " extremely busy," just at that time, the sitting must be by appointment.

Of course it is necessary for the medium to know his sitter's name and address in order that an entry may be made in his " appointment book." Once in possession of the sitter's identity, he may write to the sitter's home town, as above explained, and obtain all necessary information and material from the resident medium. He returns the material by registered mail, and is now " primed " for the next arrival of his sitter. The latter will now receive a number of fine " tests."

If spirit faces are produced at the *first* sitting, it is probably due to the fact that the medium is already possessed of a certain amount of information about his sitter before the latter arrived at all. Almost all prominent spiritualists are well known to the mediums throughout the country, and are sure to receive fine " tests " wherever they go. The Brotherhood keeps them all supplied with the latest information.

It only remains to be said that I have been discussing, throughout, *recognizable* portraits only, and not mere vague figures, " guardian angels," etc., since these can always be found *ad libitum*, and present no scientific or convincing evidence whatever.

In this chapter on " Spirit-photography," I shall include the descriptions and explanations of several miscellaneous tests, closely akin to it in general character. I include in this section, accordingly, explanations of the production of spirit-pictures — water and oil-paintings, etc. — which are produced without visible human agency. I mentioned several of these methods in the chapter on slate-writing — the production of faces on the sitter's slate — to which I refer the reader. I give here, first, a very similar method of producing faces, scenes, etc., on plain white paper, before passing on to the more complicated and wonderful tests.

The portrait is taken in the usual manner, and printed

on what is known as "solio paper." The photographer had best do this for you, unless you are an expert with the camera. After this is finished, it is bleached out with a solution of bichloride of mercury, this leaving the paper apparently perfectly blank. All that is now required in order to bring out this picture as clear as it was before, is to press the paper against a blotter that has been dampened with a solution of "hypo." This can be easily accomplished without detection, and the trick is done! It is highly probable that Mme. Blavatsky used this method to trick Colonel Olcott, and others of the Theosophical Society.

Many spiritualists have been convinced by the production of supposed "spirit-pictures" — of oil-paintings, *e. g.*, produced without apparent human agency, and upon which the oil is still wet! The canvas is first shown blank — it is free from mark or blemish of any kind. This is then taken into the cabinet, and deposited there, alongside the medium. The lights are now lowered, and, in a very few minutes, the lights are again turned up, and a complete picture is found upon the canvas, it being still wet, as stated. This proves that the painting was only just completed, at all events. The medium could not have produced the picture for three reasons: first, because the time that elapsed was far too short to allow any picture of the sort being painted; secondly, because the painting was done in the dark; and thirdly, perhaps, because the medium cannot paint or draw in the least. For all these reasons, therefore, it is obvious that the medium did not produce the picture himself; and, since it was not he, then who could have done it but the intelligences that work through him — the spirits?

It was the medium who painted the picture, nevertheless, or rather it was through his agency that the picture was produced, and by normal means, too. If the séance was held in the medium's own house, the canvas was merely *substituted* for another one, exactly like it, upon which there was a painting, just completed. The exchange was effected by means of a trap-door, opening into the cabinet and it is through this opening that the medium passes the blank can-

vas and receives the prepared one in return. If the canvas is small, the exchange is made without resorting to the trap-door method at all, the seat of the chair upon which the medium sits being hollow, and containing the duplicate picture, for which the blank canvas is exchanged at the proper moment. If, however, the séance is held in the sitter's own house, and these methods are not possible, other means are resorted to, as follows.

One method is for the medium to take an ordinary oil-painting, as fresh as possible (so long as the oil is quite dry), and over this lightly gum, around the edges, *another* piece of blank canvas, seeing to it that it looks neat at the edges. Now, as soon as the medium is alone in the cabinet, he carefully peels off this outside piece of canvas, secreting it about his person, and exposing the under canvas (the one upon which is the painting) to view. In order to produce the impression of the painting still being wet, he quickly rubs over the painting with poppy-oil, and there is your spirit painting!

Another method of producing spirit-paintings is the following, which depends on chemical means to effect the result. The oil-painting in this case is first varnished, and, after this is thoroughly dry, it is covered with a solution of water and "zinc white." The canvas will now have the appearance of being blank, and may be inspected. All the medium has to do, in order to restore the painting, is to wash over the canvas with a wet sponge, when the painting will appear as before.

Sometimes a circle is treated to the rare sight of seeing a picture form or materialize before their eyes, when no human hand is touching the canvas, the picture apparently forming upon it of its own accord! This is a most astonishing test. Here is the explanation.

A picture is made with concentrated solutions of sulphocyanide of potassium, ferrocyanide of potassium, and tannin, all of which will be invisible until brought out by the proper reägent. This is a weak solution of tincture of iron, which is thrown upon the canvas by means of an atomizer. The

first then comes out red, the second blue, and the third black. Either the medium or a confederate creeps behind the canvas during the séance, and thoroughly sprays over the back of the picture, when it will develop, as stated. In order to cover the sound of the atomizer, a music-box is set going, or the sitters are requested to sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee"!

CHAPTER XII

THE PARAFFINE MOULD TEST

THERE are few "phases" of spiritualistic phenomena that have caused more sensation, and few that are more convincing, in a way, than the phenomena known as "paraffine mould tests." These phenomena were sufficiently strong to convert Prof. William Denton to the spiritualistic belief, if report speaks truly, and they have doubtless converted many persons of lesser distinction also. It is to be presumed that this book will be read by a number of persons who are not accustomed to attend spiritualistic séances, or at least who are not acquainted with all the phenomena that are witnessed at these séances, so that it will be necessary for me, briefly, to describe a séance of this character, and to state what takes place, so as to make the subsequent explanations intelligible.

A common pail is weighed, and the weight recorded. Into this pail is placed a certain amount of paraffine (about four or five pounds), which has previously been melted, and over this is poured a quantity of hot water, as hot as the hand can bear without being burned, when the paraffine will rise to the surface. Both the paraffine and the water have been carefully weighed, and their weights recorded. The pail is now lifted carefully, and placed in the cabinet, while the sitters, including the medium, sit *outside* the cabinet, forming a complete circle around it. The "cabinet," in this case, is not the ordinary one, placed against the wall, but consists of a kind of tent, made by fastening together four slats of wood at their upper corners, thus forming a sort of square, hollow box. Over this framework is thrown a

thick, opaque cloth, reaching to the floor — the general effect being that of a table, the cloth of which reaches the ground on all sides. The "table" has no solid top, however. One side of this curtain is raised, and the pail containing the water and paraffine is placed within, on the floor, and the curtain is again allowed to drop, effectually concealing the pail from the eyes of all present.

The lights are then lowered, and all take their places at the table; the medium, as stated, being one of the number. The lights are not sufficiently low to prevent the sitters from seeing the medium, whose outline may be distinguished by all present.

After sitting thus for a few minutes, a sound is heard from within the improvised cabinet, and this is taken to be a signal to look under the curtain, and see what "the spirits" have accomplished. This is accordingly done, when there is found on the floor, and close beside the pail, a thin paraffine mould of a human hand!

Let me break off just here to state how these moulds would be produced *normally*. The first thing to do is to wash the hands in very strong soapsuds. While the hands are still wet, plunge one of them into the melted paraffine, and then quickly withdraw it. Repeat this operation four or five times, when a thin coating will cover the hand, showing its precise form so perfectly that even the exact appearance of the finger-nails can be readily recognized. To get this mould off the hand, give it an upward cut at the wrist, when it can be removed as easily as a loose glove, but will retain its shape to perfection. Close the cleft at the wrist, and cement the edges, by rapidly passing it over the blaze of a lighted lamp or candle, and afterwards smoothing it with the finger. The mould is now perfect.

Of course, the majority of sitters do not know that the moulds are obtained in this manner. They know that they are obtained in some way, they do not know just *how*. But even if they *do* know how the moulds can be obtained, it does not alter their opinion of the phenomena at the séance, since, in these cases, no living person has placed his or her hand

in the paraffine to produce the moulds, and these moulds are formed about materialized (spirit) hands, it is believed. And, indeed, it would appear so. The medium certainly had no opportunity of producing the moulds by dipping his own hands into the pail, since his hands can be seen throughout the séance; moreover, the moulds are compared with his hands at the conclusion of the séance, and are invariably found to be entirely different in every respect. A child's or a baby's hand is sometimes formed too, and found on the floor when the curtain is raised, at the conclusion of the sitting. As the medium did not produce the phenomena himself; as none of the other members of the circle could have done so without detection, and, as the manifestations are obtained in any house, the conclusion is inevitable that the moulds were not produced by normal agency, but by materialized spirit hands or feet!

Several typical séances, in which paraffine moulds of supposed spirit hands and feet were obtained will be found in Delanne's book, *Evidence for a Future Life*. On p. 126 is described a séance with Eglinton; on pp. 159-61 will be found described a remarkable séance, in which the figure materialized at the same time. Other accounts are given in various parts of the book, but the impression one receives in reading over these accounts is their utter lack of evidential value. I cannot discuss this here, but will state that the accounts altogether lack the elements that induce conviction — to any one who knows the method by which the moulds are actually obtained.

These moulds, being the productions of the spirit-world, supposedly, are highly prized by the believers, and are taken home and framed by them, as are the spirit-pictures and photographs. Reproductions of two such casts (the faces of "Asoka" and "Lilly") are reproduced on p. 195 of *The Confessions of a Medium*.

When once it is known how the moulds are obtained, it merely becomes a question of how they are introduced into the cabinet, since that is the only supernormal part about it. That is done in a variety of ways. The casts are pre-

pared *before the séance* by the medium, who enlists the services of a number of confederates to dip their hands or feet into the paraffine, thus forming the moulds. These moulds are carefully preserved in wadding until required for use. Then, when the séance is about to commence, the medium, if she be a woman, attaches the moulds to her stocking by means of a small hook, her skirts effectually concealing these hands when they (the skirts) are lowered. During the séance, the light being dim, the medium has the opportunity to loosen these moulds and to place them, one at a time, upon the floor, within the cabinet. This can be easily accomplished without detection, and the trick is done.

If the medium be a man, he may have the moulds concealed in the seat of his chair, which is hollow, this forming a receptacle for the moulds that are to be later formed by the " materialized " hands and feet.

There is one fact which needs to be explained, and that is the difference in the weight of the pail before and after the experiment. This difference is very slight, it is true, but helps to convince the skeptic. The weight of the pail and its contents before the séance is exactly equal to the weight of the pail, its contents, *and the paraffine mould*, after the latter is formed. This would seem to show that the paraffine was taken from the pail for the formation of the hand, and would disprove the theory that the mould was formed *before* the séance, and introduced into the cabinet during its progress.

This lessening in weight is very small indeed, as the mould weighs but a trifling amount, but it must be taken into consideration, if the experiment is to be considered " scientific." In order to accomplish this lessening in weight, the medium may extract a very small quantity of the water contained in the pail, thus lessening the total weight at the final " weighing-in." Or he may wait for a small quantity of water to evaporate, as it will very quickly. Or the scales may be " doctored " to weigh as the medium sees fit; or a confederate may be employed to deliberately give the wrong figures; or the medium may have some very minute weight

that is attached to the pail, and removed in the act of taking the pail from the scales (after the first weighing), and placing it in the cabinet. There are many ways that may be employed to lessen the weight of the pail, so that, when finally weighed, it will appear slightly less than at first; the above will act as examples of possible methods.

It must not be forgotten, in this connection, however, that this careful weighing has been resorted to in "test séances" only, when scientific men were present, testing the phenomena; and that, in the vast majority of cases, no such strict precautions were taken, even when weighing is insisted upon; the sitters take the word of the husband of the medium (*e. g.*), without further investigation or inquiry. Moreover, there *are* cases on record where the weight of the pail and its contents has *not* decreased one particle, although several hands and feet were materialized during the séance and moulds formed around them! This would seem to conclusively prove fraud, for how can the hands be produced, even by spirits, without using up some of the paraffine, (which they are supposed to use)? — while, if the hands were made previously, and introduced into the cabinet during the manifestations by the medium, we can readily understand the problem. D. D. Home gives an account of an exposure of this kind, in his *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, pp. 436-7, when the paraffine was collected after the séance and weighed. The result showed that the weight was exactly the *same* as it was before the séance commenced! As Home said, "How is a narrative like the above to be disposed of?"

My readers will doubtless assert that the explanation offered does not explain those cases where a materialized figure walked from the cabinet, deliberately dipped its hands into the pail, in full view, and left the moulds behind it, as a tangible evidence of its existence and objectivity, after it had dematerialized. And, more wonderful still, moulds of the spirit *faces* are often left. As all this happens in full view of the audience, and as the moulds are certainly not produced by the medium himself (as may be readily proved by comparing the moulds and the medium's hands or face

after the séance), how are these phenomena to be explained?

In a very simple manner. Let us say that several faces are to be materialized, and moulds formed thereon. A "spirit" issues from the cabinet — the room being very dimly lighted — and, leaning over the pail, dips his face into the paraffine three or four times (at least three times is necessary for the mould to retain its shape), and then into cold water, after which the spirit peels off this mask and hands it to one of the sitters, who finds it still wet and dripping. Another spirit issues from the cabinet and repeats the performance, the masks being apparently formed on the materialized spirit face before the very eyes of the sitters. As these faces are entirely unlike that of the medium, they are evidently not *his*. The conclusion arrived at by the sitter is that they are genuine, and formed then and there on the faces of the materialized spirits seen to issue from the cabinet.

The trick is worked as follows. Before the séance, the medium has prepared a number of casts from plaster of paris moulds, these faces being allowed to thoroughly dry and harden before the séance. Now, when "the spirit" issued from the cabinet, it had, fitted over its face, one of these moulds. The spirit does not, in reality, dip its face into the paraffine at all, but *does* dip it into the cold water. The result of this is that the sitter gets the mould all wet and dripping, and *infers* that the face has been dipped in *both* pails, because it certainly has been dipped into the second one. That is the whole secret, except the actual materialization of the spirit forms. That branch of the subject I treat in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER XIII

MATERIALIZATION

The character of the ordinary "materializing séance" is probably well enough known to my readers to render any long description of it unnecessary in a volume such as the present. The medium is usually tied or otherwise fastened in his cabinet, while the remainder of the spectators sit outside, in the séance-room, which is darkened more or less completely. After a certain time, hands and faces are seen in various parts of the room, and even full, life-sized forms issue from the cabinet, and walk about among the sitters.

That these figures are genuine and lifelike, and not mere hallucinations, can frequently be proved to the sense of touch, as the figures walk amongst the sitters, and speak to them, delivering messages from the dead who have gone before, and in many ways proving that they are creatures of real flesh and blood for the time being, as truly as any of the sitters are. It is believed that the spirit is, in some way, enabled to draw "vital power" from the sitters, and especially the medium, and utilize this power for the temporary upbuilding of a more or less material form, resembling the physical body of that person, when alive. After a time, this power wanes, and the figure fades or "dematerializes," sometimes before the eyes of the sitters, leaving nothing behind to show that there has been present a figure or a body, which, but a short time before, gave evidence of being as material and as incapable of "dematerializing" as that of any of the sitters. Needless to say, if this fact of materialization and dematerialization *be* a fact, it is one of the most extraordinary, as well as one of the most important that

science has ever discovered, and one of the most difficult of solution that the man of science will ever be called upon to explain or solve.

It is hardly necessary to remark that I have spoken of the phenomena presented as they appear to the sitter, and as spiritualists and mediums assert the phenomena actually are produced; and I have not attempted to assert that genuine materialization is not a fact. Whether or not such a phenomenon ever occurs, and the scientific attitude toward its *a priori* possibility, will be considered later in the discussion. Certain it is that the history of modern spiritualism, and especially the history of materialization, does not afford us any valid grounds for assuming that this phenomenon is ever genuine, or anything more than the clumsy reproduction, by fraud, of the phenomena genuine materialization would be supposed to represent. For, with hardly an exception, all the professional mediums through whose agency these manifestations are supposed to be obtained, have, at one time or another, been found reproducing, or endeavoring to reproduce, the phenomena by fraudulent means. For those who wish confirmation of this statement, I would refer to Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 95-116 (Vol. II.), Herne, Williams, Miss Cook, Miss Showers, Eglinton, Doctor Monck, Miss Lottie Fowler, Miss Wood, Miss Fairlamb, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Mellon, the Eddys — to quote only a few of the names most widely known as materializing mediums — all these rest under a heavy cloud of suspicion, if there is no proof that fraud was practised by them. The investigations of members of the S. P. R. went to prove that fraud and nothing but fraud was practised by all the mediums seen by them, in their numerous investigations. In Mrs. Sidgwick's paper, "Results of a Personal Investigation into the Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism,"[1] will be found much valuable information in regard to the mediums investigated at that time. The evidence in the cases of Miss Wood and Miss Fairlamb was particularly damaging. (Miss Fairlamb afterward became Mrs. Mellon, and it is by this name that

[1] *Proceedings*, Vol. IV., pp. 45-74.

she is best known to the spiritualistic world. I shall, accordingly, call her by that name in the discussion that follows.) In fact the history of materializing mediums is so full of exposés, and the evidence of fraud so overwhelming and so constant, that, as the result of carefully considering the evidence in the case, and the personal histories of the various materializing mediums, William T. Stead (a spiritualist) could only say, writing in 1892, "The phenomena of spiritualism, at least so far as relates to the materializing of spirits, seems to be much less frequent in London at present than they were some years ago. During these investigations I have made great efforts to obtain the services of a trustworthy materializing medium who has not at any time been detected in fraud. There are three or four materializing mediums who give séances in London; but, whether from misfortune or their own fault, their names have all been associated at one time or another with the production of fraudulent phenomena. I am not now speaking of what is said by such opponents of spiritualistic phenomena as Doctor Weatherly and Mr. Maskelyne. I am speaking of what has been communicated to me by fervent spiritualists, whom I have consulted, in the hope that they might be able to furnish me with the address of a trustworthy materializing medium. The net result of my inquiries came to this: that, in the whole of the United Kingdom, so far as was known to the spiritualist community, there was only one person of undoubted materializing faculty and undoubted character who could almost always secure the presence of phenomena, and who had never been detected in a trick of any kind. . . . I refer to Mrs. Mellon, late of Newcastle-on-Tyne, whose success as a materializing medium is undoubted." [1]

This rather dubious and unsatisfactory evidence must be discounted, however, owing to two considerations. First, the most unsatisfactory nature of the evidence brought to light by Mrs. Sidgwick, in the paper previously referred to, in which fraud was strongly suggested, though not actually found; and secondly, because Mrs. Mellon, of "undoubted

[1] *More Ghost Stories*, p. 54.

character," was detected and caught red-handed, in producing the grossest fraud, in a circle in Sydney, Australia; and, though Mr. Stead and others tried to defend the medium in *Borderland*, and to show that the detection did not point to fraud at all, it is most obvious to any one carefully studying the evidence in the case that Mrs. Mellon did practise fraud, while the evidence points to the fact that she was in the habit of producing it constantly.

The whole story will be found in a book entitled, *Spookland: A Record of Research and Experiment in the Much Talked of Realm of Mystery*, etc., by T. Shekleton Henry, A. R. I. B. A. Here we read that, after a number of sittings with Mrs. Mellon, in which spirits materialized and were photographed, the sitters, believing that the so-called spirits were none other than Mrs. Mellon herself in various disguises, agreed to seize "the spirit," when it should materialize at the next séance, and hold fast to the figure, and thus ascertain whether it was in truth a spirit form that was held, or the body of Mrs. Mellon herself. Accordingly, on the night of Friday, 12th of October, 1894, at a séance held in Mrs. Mellon's house, Mr. Henry suddenly seized the figure that issued from the cabinet, "and found that I held the form of Mrs. Mellon, and that she was on her knees, and had a white material like muslin round her head and shoulders. I can swear positively that when I seized the form Mrs. Mellon was on her knees. She struggled, but I held her firmly and called for the light to be turned up. Some one struck matches, and then I saw that Mrs. Mellon had a mask of black material over her face, and aforesaid white drapery round her shoulders, her sleeves drawn up above the elbows, the skirt of her dress turned up, and her feet bare. She was on her knees, and I held her in the position in which I had caught her. The matches were blown out, and I was assaulted by two or three men present, Mr. Mellon catching me by the throat and tearing off my necktie. I never let go my hold on Mrs. Mellon, however, until the gas in the back room was lit and turned full on, and every one present had an opportunity of seeing Mrs. Mellon in

the position and in the condition in which I had caught her. I looked inside the cabinet, and saw, lying upon the floor (inside the cabinet) a false beard. I called Mr. Roydhouse over, and he picked up the beard, but it was snatched from his hand. As soon as I relaxed my hold, Mrs. Mellon tore the black mask from her face and the drapery from her shoulders, and hid them under her petticoat. I then entered the cabinet, and found on the floor a small black shawl, some old muslin, Mrs. Mellon's shoes and stockings, and a small black cotton bag about nine inches square, with black tapes attached to it . . ." (pp. 50-1).[1]

The exposure, in the case of Mrs. Mellon, then, seems to be about as complete as possible, and clearly shows that Mrs. Mellon was in the habit of producing phenomena of the kind constantly, and by the same means. And, if that is the case, then Mr. Stead's "unique" case vanishes, and the history of materialization, so far as professional mediums are

[1] My readers who are unfamiliar with the history of the subject may think that this is a most out-of-the-way and unique occurrence. That is not by any means the case; those who think so might consult a book entitled "*The Vampires of Onset: Past and Present*," containing numerous accounts of such "grabbings" of the spirit by skeptical sitters, parts of the book reading more like a description of a prize-fight than a spiritualistic séance! I quote one case which is quite typical of a number:

"Smash! Down came a black-jack on the head of a man who tried to force open the cabinet, which, by this time, was found to be barricaded by a heavy wooden partition and secured by means of a stout spring lock. It resisted the united efforts of three men who tried to kick it down. The two men who had been inside succeeded in dragging out the woman and stripped her of a cheap, cheese-cloth garment with an elastic neck-band and short sleeves of such a size as might be worn by a girl of sixteen.

"Whack! Smash came a stove-lifter down on the head of a curiously disposed individual, while three or four sluggers in the employ of the establishment made a grand rush to cut off further investigation. The man who did the clubbing was seen to be Cowen, the husband of the medium, and in his assaults he was joined by two other men, while the fourth contented himself with pulling and hauling at the investigating party. In all, a half-dozen blows with black-jacks and the stove-lifter were struck by Cowen and his 'Healers' (!) and one of the visiting party was badly cut on the neck, crown of the head, and over the right eye. The resistance made by Cowen was savage and persistent, and not until Officer Hensey of the 4th police division burst in the door and placed the 'twisters' on Cowen's wrists did he desist from showing fight" (p. 14). This, it must be remembered, was at a spiritualistic séance, where, if ever, the most elevating of all the soul's aspirations are supposed to be centred. Can it be wondered at that, so long as this kind of thing goes on, spiritualism is held in contempt by the public — whose sole knowledge of it is derived from newspaper accounts of such disgraceful occurrences as these?

concerned, is practically one unbroken line of fraud, and this has been the more forcefully emphasized by the fact that the newest cases investigated by the S. P. R. have proved to be fraudulent.[1] A review of the evidence procured by the Seybert Commission and the American Society for Psychical Research,[2] confirms this opinion; while the absurdly uncritical attitude of many of the early investigators, a fair sample of which may be found in Olcott's *People of the Other World* (this being literally torn to pieces in a review by D. D. Home, the medium, in his book, *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, pp. 301-28), may account for the extraordinary nature of many of the narratives recorded, and the lack of exposure in the early days of the subject.

There are, in the whole history of the subject, only two cases that call for serious consideration (aside from those mentioned on pp. 237-8), these being the case of Miss Cook, and the case detailed at great length by M. Aksakof in his *A Case of Partial Dematerialization of the Body of a Medium*, he, indeed, devoting a whole book to a consideration of that case. The former of these I shall not stop to consider in detail here. That will be found discussed in Podmore's *Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 120, and in his *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 97-9, and 153-5. As no detailed criticism of the latter case has ever appeared in print, so far as I am aware, it may be worth our while briefly to examine this case, which seems to stand out the more strongly amid the fraud disclosed in the other cases which we have just examined.

The famous séance, which, as stated, M. Aksakof considered sufficiently important to devote a whole book of nearly two hundred pages to, relates the occurrences of a séance that took place in Helsingfors, Finland, December 11, 1893. The medium, Mme. D'Esperance, was seated in a chair, outside the cabinet, which was behind her, the sitters being in front of her in a sort of horseshoe formation. The light was very dim, so dim, in fact, that several of the sitters

[1] See *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. XII., pp. 266-8 and 274-7.
[2] *Amer. Proc. S. P. R.* (old Society), pp. 102-3.

asserted afterward that they could not see anything that transpired, having to depend almost solely on the sense of touch, when they were called up to examine the medium, as will be presently described. After some minor manifestations, the medium stated that the lower part of her body had dematerialized, and that, whereas her head and the upper portion of her trunk was visible and tangible, her lower limbs, and the lower portion of her body had dematerialized and could no longer be seen or felt! Needless to say, such an astounding phenomenon caused considerable stir and some amount of skepticism amid the sitters in the circle. But the medium, to silence their doubts, invited them to come up and ascertain for themselves, and see whether or not this was the case. Several of the sitters availed themselves of this offer, and while they could distinctly see the upper portion of the medium's body in front of the chair on which she was sitting, and while the medium could talk, drink water, etc., the lower portion of her body had apparently dematerialized, being no longer visible, while the whole seat of the chair could be distinctly felt by the sitters, who were allowed to feel it with their hands. From the reports, there can be no reasonable doubt that the upper portion of the medium's body was really in front of the chair-back, nor can there be any doubt that the lower portion of her body was absent, and the legs not simply drawn back, *e. g.*, against the sides of the chair. The evidence would thus appear to be fairly conclusive, and it is only a detailed examination of the various reports that reveals the possibility of fraud, which, I believe, was practised in this case, and the nature of which was evident to me the moment I had read them.

The secret consisted (in all probability) in the following fact. The back of the chair was partially open, and of sufficient size to allow the medium to thrust her legs through as far as the hips, when the dress had been drawn up, and spread over the seat of the chair. The medium would, therefore, be in a kneeling position behind the chair, with the upper part of her body in front of the chair-back, and, of course, visible to the investigators who made the examination.

No one thought of looking behind the chair, (this is stated in the evidence), nor did any one, apparently, suspect the manner in which the medium was producing the "dematerialization." The evidence is to my mind absurdly inconclusive, and hardly worth consideration at all, from the strictly evidential standpoint. It is only because the case is made so much of by many spiritualists that I have deemed it necessary to consider it here at the length I have.[1]

It is possible, or, at least, conceivable that such a thing as genuine materialization exists as a fact in nature, though the available testimony must render us extremely wary in accepting evidence which would necessitate our accepting the phenomena of materialization as genuine and proved beyond doubt or cavil. It is conceivable that the ethereal body, described by many able writers on the subject,[2] may, under certain conditions, about which we at present know nothing, become visible and manifest to us in some such manner as by materialization, though, as stated, the lack of evidence for such phenomena renders all such speculations premature. Mr. Myers has beautifully worked out the scientific possibilities in his *Human Personality*, Vol. II., pp. 538-40; pp. 544-9, etc. It is true that Doctor Maxwell has recorded [3] several most remarkable phenomena (luminous) which seem hard to account for by any process of trickery, phenomena strikingly similar to those recorded in *Occult Science in India*, p. 267. It is also true that Professor Richet has recently recorded a case of materialization, obtained under apparent test conditions, that is most extraordinary,[4] and that Sir William Crookes has seen and felt hands materialized at séances with D. D. Home, which hands, Sir William explicitly stated, were *not* drawn away forcibly, but melted,

[1] My detailed analysis of this case, with diagrams, will be found in the *Proceedings* of the American Society for Psychical Research, Vol. I., Part 1, March, 1907.

[2] See Elbé, *Future Life in the Light of Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science;* H. Frank, *A Scientific Demonstration of the Soul's Existence and Immortality;* Delanne, *Evidence for a Future Life;* Myers, *Human Personality*, etc.

[3] *Metapsychical Phenomena*, pp. 150-4.

[4] *Annals of Psychic Science*, October, November, 1905.

as it were, in the hands of the sitter, when he continued to hold them (all this in good light), which fact, I may add, is confirmed by various other witnesses of the Home phenomena.[1] I do not deny any of these facts, or wish to depreciate the character or value of the evidence for these remarkable manifestations; I only insist that there is not *enough* evidence of this character to warrant our speculating seriously on the nature of these facts, unless we know that they *are* facts. We need more positive evidence before speculation becomes valid. And the whole history of the subject is so besmirched with fraud that we should be particularly careful in accepting data obtained through the professional materializing medium. One of the most remarkable cases I have ever read is that related by the Ven. Archdeacon Colley,[2] where a spirit was apparently seen to materialize from a cloud of vapor, which, in turn, is seen to issue from the medium's side. I know of no case which seems as remarkable as this one does, or that conveys to the reader's mind the impression that the facts narrated could not have been produced by fraud; and yet, Mr. J. N. Maskelyne, on October 8, 1906, at St. George's Hall, London, duplicated this phenomenon by fraudulent means alone. If so much can be accomplished by fraud we should certainly be most careful in accepting statements, and even the evidences of our senses, in this field. We should, at all events, be content to await further evidence before finally believing that such phenomena as these are other than frauds, or the results of trickery.

It is necessary that we should now turn to a consideration of the actual methods that are employed by mediums to produce the phenomena of materialization by fraudulent means. In order to render the subsequent explanations intelligible, I shall first quote a typical description of a materialization séance given by an eye-witness, from which description the reader may form a good idea of what occurs, and the detailed

[1] See Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 106; *Dialectical Report*, p. 120; Owen, *Debatable Land*, pp. 351-2, etc.
[2] *Annals of Psychic Science*, December, 1905, pp. 392-9.

explanations that follow will be rendered more easily intelligible than if I were to describe a series of phenomena, none of which were familiar to the general reader.

"Everything now being in readiness, the medium seated himself in a chair, after first bringing a tambourine, guitar, tea-bell, tin trumpet, and a pair of castanets and depositing them inside the cabinet. After being seated he proffered some pieces of rope and stated that any one was at liberty to bind his hands and feet, or secure him in any way he saw fit, in order to preclude the possibility of his having the use of any of his members during the continuance of the séance. Again did the writer, in company with the only other skeptical gentleman in the company, exert all his ingenuity in binding the medium so that he felt positively assured that he would still be in the chair when the séance was closed. After the tying was finished, the writer would have wagered any amount that it was an utter impossibility for the medium to free himself. . . . Medium and chair were now picked up and deposited in the cabinet, and the curtains drawn.

"We had no more than reached our seats than the guitar was seen gyrating around in space over the top of the cabinet, with no visible contact with anything. The light had been shaded until you could just distinguish the forms of the sitters, without being able to discern their features. After a few seconds, the guitar was joined by the tin trumpet, and out of it came a voice saying:

"'I am the spirit-father of Mr. B——, and my name is J—— B——,' giving his name in full.

"This test was instantly recognized by one of the gentlemen, and there followed a commonplace message to his daughter-in-law, the wife of Mr. B——, who was present. While this was transpiring, the guitar had disappeared into the cabinet again. As soon as the speaking had ceased, and the trumpet fallen to the floor, we were requested to examine the condition of things in the cabinet. Again the skeptics were permitted to do the investigating. We found the medium in precisely the condition in which we had left him at the beginning, it not appearing that he had stirred.

"We had not reached our seats, which were distant about eight feet from the cabinet, when the guitar again made its appearance, and began playing an air of great beauty, the entire instrument being visible, but the hands that created the music upon it could not be seen. The music produced was subdued, soft, and sweet, as though the strings were being manipulated by very gentle, soft finger-tips. The skeptics were now very much interested. Again the horn joined the guitar, and when the latter had ceased its music, announced that its name was W—— E——, son of Mr. and Mrs. E——. The horn was correct again, and, after giving a message, in which he gave some instructions concerning his pony, that the parents still kept, the horn fell to the floor of the cabinet, and an examination disclosed everything as we had last seen it. The medium appeared to be in a trance or sleep, his eyes closed, teeth set, and breathing heavily. We had just turned our backs on the cabinet, after the examination, when a shapely white hand protruded through the opening in the curtains. Before we had seated ourselves there were two, three, four, all of different sizes, and doing considerable finger-snapping, thus doing away with the idea of rubber hands, stuffed gloves, etc. Then came a bare foot at the bottom of the curtain, and, in response to a request by one of the circle, the toes were wiggled. No one was allowed to touch the hands or feet that appeared, but it was evident to any one in possession of his five senses that they were human hands and feet and not rubber or wax, even did we not know that nothing of the kind had been carried in by the medium. After a few moments of these manifestations, another examination of the cabinet and medium was made, and everything found satisfactory. Now, the tea-bell began ringing, and was soon joined by the castanets and tambourine. Ever and anon one or another of the instruments would swoop around above the cabinet and disappear again. They seemed to be flying about in all parts of the cabinet, and to be travelling with great swiftness and force; and it appeared as though the medium's eyes stood a very fair chance of being decorated

in black! Another examination and everything found satisfactory. The writer was wavering, and was most intensely interested, to the great delight of his sister. The horn now requested that the company sing 'Sweet By and By.' Whilst the company was singing, they were joined by the horn in a deep and powerful voice, which claimed afterward that it was, at the time, 'John King,' the medium's main control. After the song was finished, a rustling noise was heard in the cabinet, and presently the curtains were agitated, and slowly a face presented itself at the opening. Plainly, it was a face, but it was not recognized. Then other faces appeared, but without recognition. Once more the guitar strikes up its music, and, during its continuance, the curtains open sufficiently to reveal to our astonished gaze a form, draped from head to foot in a dazzling white robe, in which there appeared to be a great many yards of material used. The face, in this instance, was much plainer, and in fact, was recognized by one of our number, who, however, said nothing until the form announced its name as Mrs. E—— L——, mother of the lady sitting next to our host. The form spoke in a loud whisper, but no movement of the lips was visible. It stood stock-still, and might have been mistaken for a dummy were it not that the face was so absolutely identified by the lady it claimed as daughter, and the full name it gave being entirely correct. The form remained in sight for a period of about twenty seconds, and, after it had disappeared, the horn announced that the daughter carried the mother's watch, and that it contained the photo of her father. This the lady declared to be correct, and after the séance exhibited the watch, with the photo inside, and the name given by the spirit graven on the inside of the back lid. The lady declared that she had never before met the medium.

"The props were being knocked from under the writer's materialism in beautiful shape! Other forms now presented themselves, and four of them recognized. One of the faces was an exact likeness to an uncle of the writer's, and he was almost paralyzed with astonishment, and ready to throw up

his hands in surrender, when his sister, addressing the spirit, said:

"'Uncle L——' (for she, too, had recognized the face), 'have you anything to say to brother? Tell him something to convince him.' The writer was just about to say that it required no more evidence to convince him of the possibility of spirit return, when the apparition spoke, saying:

"'Indeed, I should be pleased to grant the lady's request, but not being the spirit I am taken for, I cannot do so. I am the spirit of S—— W——, and the cousin of Mrs. D——.'

"The lady named said she had never seen him in life, but there was a resemblance to a photograph of him in the family album. None of the forms or faces remained more than from five to twenty seconds.

"Now, if this was the work of the medium, why did he not take the opportunity presented of palming off one of his dummies on one who had already accepted it as an uncle, and make an *absolute* test of it, instead of denying that it was the spirit supposed to be, and make an uncertain test of it? This thought also struck the gentleman skeptic who assisted the writer in the examinations.

"Occurring as it did, it certainly went far toward sustaining the medium as honest, and having no part in the presentation of the phenomena. Both skeptics were by this time pretty well *hors du combat*. All that was now required was that some spirit friend or message present itself that could be recognized, and the 'turn was made.' The horn now made itself heard again, and began announcing the names of the spirits present. In all, about twenty were given, and eleven of them recognized. Among them were four full names of the author's deceased relatives, two of them giving date of death, and the cause thereof, and sending messages of love to members of the family not present, in each case, giving the name of the one the message was for. My sister informed me that she had never even heard of this particular medium before that week, and this was the first visit of any

member of the family to him. The writer struck his arms and capitulated!

"After another examination of the condition of things in the cabinet which resulted satisfactorily, there was a regular bedlam of noises begun, made by each one of the instruments setting out on an erratic aërial excursion about the confines of the cabinet. Occasionally, one or two of the instruments would dart up out of the top of the cabinet, and, after executing a few fantastic movements, go below and join the general rumpus on the inside. It was, apparently, impossible for the medium, even were he free, to put the instruments where they were seen; and besides this, the entire instrument was visible, and it was impossible to detect anything in connection with them, they seeming to float about the atmosphere as a balloon. Certain it was that the guitar could not perform on itself, and there was no human hand visible, to cause the vibration of the strings.

"The only thing appearing strange, regarding the guitar, was that only *one* air was executed upon it. Immediately the rumpus ceased, another inspection of the cabinet was made, and everything found as it had been. The trumpet now requested that a writing-tablet and pencil be placed in the cabinet. This was done, and in a few minutes five messages of greeting, from 'controls,' were handed out. One was in English, and signed by John King; another in French, another in German, another in Spanish, and the last in Hebrew, which no one present could read. It was taken next day, by the writer and others, to a Hebrew clothing dealer, who read and interpreted it with ease, and stated that it was elegantly written. The medium claimed to have no knowledge of any language save English, and was unable to speak that correctly, — which was a fact, for he did badly mangle the language every time he spoke. While we were waiting the thrusting out of the sixth sheet, the medium was heard to moan and yawn and move uneasily. In the course of a minute and a half, he called for light, and stepped out of the cabinet, freed from the ropes that had bound him less than two minutes before! An examination revealed the fact

that the medium had not only slid out of the ropes, but that every knot had been untied, and the ropes lay in a heap in the corner. Think of it! *Something* had untied the knots in less than two minutes, that (to tie) had required ten minutes of time of two men! The instruments were handled and examined, and found to be perfectly innocent of any mechanism not properly belonging to them, with the exception of a small hole, about the eighth of an inch in diameter, bored into the neck of the instrument, on the lower side and near the body of the guitar. The medium explained that it was for the purpose of attaching a music-holder to the instrument, and, as he was stopping with our host for the evening, he soon brought the holder and put it in position. It answered the purpose admirably, and satisfactorily explained the presence of the hole."

In a séance such as the above, there are several factors that must be taken into consideration, requiring an explanation, they being independent and distinct from the "materialization proper," which alone concerns us in the present chapter. The methods of obtaining the "test information" about the sitter are explained on pp. 312-18; the rope-tying manifestations I have explained in the chapter devoted to that subject, pp. 143-67; the self-playing guitar I have explained on p. 197; to the "messages" I shall again recur on p. 317; so that in the present chapter there remains for our consideration only the methods the medium employs in fraudulently producing the materialized hands, faces and forms. To this aspect of the problem I accordingly turn. I shall first of all describe the methods of obtaining the spirit hands and faces, leaving the more detailed and the more wonderful "full-form materializations" for later discussion.

It need hardly be stated that many of the "materialized hands" seen at séances are none other than the medium's own. Under cover of the intense darkness that is always called for when materializations of the kind are seen, the medium releases himself from his bonds, and does his own "spirit touches" merely by walking about the room and

touching one or other of the sitters, either with his bare hand, or after donning a glove dipped in cold water, to give a cold, clammy effect to the sitter experiencing the touch. This is a device frequently employed. In many cases the medium rubs over the surface of the glove with luminous paint, this giving the effect of a bright, shining hand, floating in space, since the performer, if entirely dressed in black, is quite invisible in the darkness. (Those of my readers who doubt the fact that any figure dressed in this manner would be *absolutely* invisible should witness the public performance of an act known as "Black Art," in which the performer's assistants walk freely about the stage, which is entirely darkened, and produce the many marvellous effects witnessed. The illusion is *perfect*, and no one witnessing the performance, and not knowing how the effects are produced, can detect the method of operation, no matter how closely he may watch the stage.)

Some mediums make use of the damp kid glove, just described, in a very clever manner. They stuff the glove, and attach the back of the hand to the small end of the telescopic rod, mentioned on p. 196. By moving the rod about in various directions, touching the sitters with the glove, they are enabled to produce the phenomenon of "spirit touches" at a great distance from themselves, and in places where it would be impossible for them to reach, even were they free. A still more astonishing phenomenon may be produced by attaching the glove to the rod by means of a piece of stout black silk thread, about a yard or so in length. Now, by waving the rod about in various directions, the glove is given a great range, and moves so rapidly, moreover, that several sitters may feel the touch of the hand at the *same instant* (practically), which would, of course, have the effect of several hands all active at the same time. The hand may or may not be made luminous, in this case, as desired.

Mr. J. H. W. Shaw describes a very effective variation of the method just described in his *Magic and Its Mysteries*, pp. 55-6. The effect, in this case, is this: after the medium is securely tied in the chair, a luminous hand slowly mate-

rializes, only the tips of the fingers at first being visible, but afterward the whole hand comes into view, until the arm up to the elbow is seen. It now suddenly disappears and as suddenly appears again, finally vanishing altogether.

The effect is produced, in this case, by the following means. The medium has secreted about his person a glove made of black material, the palm of which is coated with luminous paint, and the rest of the hand and arm is also painted very lightly with it. To the elbow of this glove is sewn a cylinder of thick, black cloth, of sufficient length to completely cover the hand and arm when pulled over it. Before the séance begins the medium gives the glove a coat of paint, as stated, pulls the cylinder up over the glove, and secretes it about his person. At the proper time the medium dons the glove, which is still invisible because of the covering black-cloth cylinder. Slowly, the medium pulls this off toward the shoulder, thereby disclosing the hand and arm, the palm of which is turned to the sitters. Now, by suddenly pulling the black cloth over the hand again, the medium is enabled to produce the phenomenon of materialization and dematerialization as often as desired.

The famous (or rather infamous) Doctor Monck was in the habit of producing a very remarkable manifestation, a materialized spirit hand, that of *a baby*, in partial light, and when the medium was sitting at the table together with the other sitters. Doctor Monck would sit at one end of the table, when presently the table-cloth would be seen to move, and from beneath the table would come the tiny hand, which, after a few seconds' visibility, would suddenly dematerialize, and a thorough search under the table would fail to reveal the clue to the mystery. "Professor Hoffmann," in a Note to his translation of Houdin's *Secrets of Stage Conjuring*, gives (pp. 220-1) a description of this test and an exposé of the manner in which the trick was performed. He says, in part:

"A dummy hand of small size, with the fingers slightly bent, is attached to a piece of broad elastic about three feet in length. This in turn is fastened to a belt round the per-

former's waist, and thence passes down (say) his left trouser leg, the hand reposing, when not wanted, within the garment, a few inches above the ankle. To the wrist of the hand is appended a kind of elastic sleeve of five or six inches in length. (In Monck's case, if we remember rightly, it consisted of the upper portion of an ordinary sock.) The medium, thus prepared, takes his seat at one side of a square table, with an overhanging table-cover, allowing no one else to be seated at the same side of the table. . . . Some one present is requested to lower the gas. 'A little lower, please. A little lower yet,' till, as a natural consequence, it goes out altogether. 'Dear me,' says the medium, 'I am extremely sorry! I did not intend you to turn it out. Pray light it again!' This is done and it is again lowered but this time only to a dim twilight. Meanwhile, under cover of the momentary darkness, the medium has quietly crossed his left foot over his right knee, pulled down the dummy hand, slipped the sleeve portion over the toe of his left shoe, and, with the foot masked by the table-cover, calmly bides his time. Presently, on the right hand of the medium, something is seen to be moving under the table-cover, making apparent efforts to come out. The medium, at the same time, prepares the minds of the spectators by declaring that he sees a hand floating about, that it has touched him, and so on. Presently, he gradually draws his foot, still crossed over the right knee, from under the table-cover, and allows the hand to show itself just above the surface. . . . Doctor Monck went so far as to offer a set of 'fairy bells' to the touch of the spirit hand, and, partly by scraping the hand against the wires (or rather the wires against the hand), and partly by a judicious use of his own fingers, produced sounds which, though not particularly harmonious, passed muster fairly enough as the production of a hand without a body. The manifestation over, the performer has only to place the left foot on the ground, and, with the other foot, dislodge the dummy hand, which is forthwith spontaneously drawn back by the elastic band beneath the sheltering

trouser. The gas being turned up, skeptical gentlemen may search beneath the table, but in vain."

When hands appear above the top of the cabinet, or otherwise beyond the normal reach of the medium, it is either a stuffed glove that is exhibited, or a glove that is attached to the end of the medium's telescopic rod, and made to open and close by the medium blowing through the hollow rod, causing the glove to alternately fill out and relapse into "flabby nothingness," according to the amount of air forced into the rod and glove. In a dim light, this has a very good effect. Then, again, the medium often makes use of simple pieces of cardboard, painted black, upon each of which is painted a hand in white. By exhibiting this hand at the top of the cabinet, and at the same time snapping *his own* fingers, he can produce the effect of the hand itself causing this sound, thus proving, not only its objective reality, but the fact that it is made of flesh and blood! Several hands can be made to appear in like manner, at the same time, the medium attaching them to his rod, by means of a slot in the end of it.

Some ingenious medium devised the following plan, by which the hand may be made to move, apparently, to open and close, *e. g.*, or to snap the fingers. This proves to every sitter conclusively that the hands are real, for what but real hands can move in that manner? The secret consists in the fact that the medium has painted on *both* sides of his blackened card a hand in white, these hands being painted in different postures. The medium simply slips the cardboard into the slot in the end of his telescopic rod, as before described, and exhibits, first one side and then the other of the painted card. If the half-turn is made quickly enough, it is quite invisible to the sitters, and the effect of the turn is to produce a complete illusion in the minds of the sitters that the hand has itself moved before their eyes. If the supposed card is painted to represent the fingers snapping, the medium snaps his own, and the spirit hand is supposed to have produced the sound!

If the hands felt at a séance are unmistakably human,

then the sitter may rest assured that they are either those of the medium, who has in some manner managed to release himself from his holds or ties, or those of some confederate, such confederates being frequently introduced in séances of this character as will presently appear.

We now pass on to consider the methods that are employed by the medium in order to produce "full-form materialization," in which *figures* are seen to issue from the cabinet, while the medium is securely tied and otherwise fastened to his chair within it. These forms are almost invariably clothed from head to foot in dazzling white garments, and the question at once arises, where did the medium (supposing it to be he, disguised, and parading about the séance-room) obtain all the material and other portions of the make-up, since he was thoroughly searched before he entered the cabinet, and nothing of such a nature was found upon him? Even granting that the medium was enabled to release himself in some manner from the cords that tied him to his chair, and, disguising himself, enter the séance-room and act the part of some spirit, how did he obtain possession of the white drapery and other material in which the spirit was clothed? The fact that the medium was thoroughly searched just before the séance, and no such "properties" found upon him, would seem to show that it was not and *could* not be the medium; and any fraud on his part was consequently out of the question. How mistaken this idea is we shall now see.

There are many ways in which clothes may be smuggled into the cabinet by the medium, without the sitters being aware of the fact, or suspect that any trickery is being practised upon them. One of the most ingenious devices is the following, which has been used by mediums for many years past, and which is still very largely employed. On p. 197 I described a self-playing guitar, the secret being that it contained a music-box, which, when wound up and set going, would play a tune without necessitating any fingering of the strings by the medium. That, however, is only half the secret of the guitar, for, besides the music-box, the guitar also contained a sliding panel, opening into a hollow com-

partment in the interior, and in this compartment are placed the robes and other paraphernalia employed by the medium in dressing up as the spirit he purports to be. These robes are made of a sort of fine netting, and are capable of being compressed into a remarkably small space, the full costume of an adult spirit folding into a space no larger than a good-sized watch. Indeed, these robes are sometimes carried in this manner instead of the guitar. The watch is a dummy, is hollow, and is filled with the costumes for the evening's séance! At other times this material is carried in a purse, a letter, or in many other ways that will suggest themselves. One method frequently employed is that of placing the material in the hollow boot-heel. The heel of the shoe is made of steel, being, in fact, a sort of hollowed out box, covered over with leather, and blackened to imitate the regular shoe. Usually, however, the medium carries a series of netting masks in this heel, these also folding up into a very small compass. If the medium gives the séance in his own house, there are, of course, many ways of gaining possession of the requisite material, — hollow chair-seats, table-legs, etc., forming convenient receptacles for the robes and other paraphernalia used in the séance.

Mr. Lunt, in his little book, *Mysteries of the Séance*, has described a method he has found used by female mediums to evade the watchfulness of searchers, in cases where the medium, as a test, is obliged to don the all-black clothes provided by the sitters. It is this:

"Some female mediums have a novel arrangement by which they can carry into the cabinet all the supplies they want, in spite of the strictest search. For instance, one has a black cloth belt made deep enough to hold a great variety of stuff. This is worn around the waist next the skin, and held in place by an elastic band. Over this is the usual black skirt, then the other clothing. When the committee of ladies search her, she entirely disrobes down to this black skirt, which she retains 'for modesty's sake,' until the skirt provided by the committee is put on over it. Then the black skirt is unhooked and taken off. This leaves her supposedly

clothed only in the committee's clothing, which of course is all dark. To satisfy them that all is right she lifts the last skirt as high as possible, and shows the bare skin, and the presence of the useful little belt is not suspected. The rest of the clothing provided is donned, and the performance goes on with the greatest success" (pp. 32-3). From the description and remarks on p. 44 of Henry's *Spookland*, it appears to me highly probable that Mrs. Melon used some such device as the above.

The *modus operandi* of the ordinary materializing séance should now be pretty clearly defined in the sitter's mind. The medium is not usually fastened in his cabinet; and if he *is* tied, or otherwise secured, he releases himself by one or other of the methods before enumerated. Then he proceeds to dress himself up in the robes, etc., he has managed to smuggle into the cabinet by one means or another, as described. When the robes are properly adjusted, the medium dons the wig, mask, etc., that is appropriate for the character he is to portray, and boldly walks into the room and asserts that he *is* that individual![1] If his voice is one that is easily disguised, the medium makes bold to speak aloud; otherwise the "spirit" confines its conversation to loud whispers. The more dramatic the play the better, of course, up to a certain extent, though the medium who knows his business will always remember that spirits should conduct themselves with becoming gravity. A certain amount of "the actor" must enter into any medium who makes a success of his profession. Darkness, the dramatic setting of the séance, and suggestion can be depended upon to do the rest. I have more fully elaborated this branch of the subject in my chapter on the Psychology of Deception, and it is not necessary for me to consider it at any great length now. My object for the moment is to show how these forms are actually produced, and not their possible significance. I have

[1] In some cases, it is impossible for the medium to escape — when, *e. g.*, he is fastened in a cage provided by a committee. In that case, he frees himself as much as possible, and shows a variety of masks, robes, etc., through the curtains, — these being attached to the end of his telescopic rod and thrust between the bars of the cage and the cabinet curtains. Some very effective figures can be created in this way.

described other methods of materialization, and other devices on pp. 268-75.

It remains for me but to consider certain materialization phenomena which we have not so far discussed, such, *e. g.*, as the production of "spirit lights," "apports," etc. To these I now turn. Spirit lights may be produced in a variety of ways, one of the simplest being the following, a method very frequently employed.

The medium procures a bottle, or flask, holding about two pints. Into this he drops the heads of about one hundred parlor matches ("red-heads"), and over these is poured just enough water to cover them, and a little more. The flask is now kept tightly corked for some time. When the medium requires to produce his spirit lights, he brings forth this bottle, and, while slightly shaking it, removes the stopper a *very little*, when the portion of the bottle that is filled with the fumes will present a very beautiful phosphorescent appearance. If a transparent wire mask be held before the bottle, it will be greeted as a spirit face by the sitters, and very likely recognized by one or more of them as a dead relative! (*v.* p. 52). By simply moistening the fingers and rolling a match between them, a very fine effect is produced, though the light is, of course, small. Spirit lights of different sizes and shapes are made by cutting out pieces of cloth of the shape required, and pasting them on cardboard. These are painted with luminous paint after the manner described on p. 269. They are attached to the end of the telescopic rod, so often spoken of throughout this book, and moved about over the sitters' heads. The manner of producing luminous hands, arms, and faces will be presently described. The methods the medium will resort to are innumerable. It is even asserted that some mediums have had the hardihood to introduce fireflies into the séance-room, as a means of producing these effects!

Just recently, some ingenious medium has devised a method by which it is possible to produce luminous names, apparently flashed out of the air, with lightening-like rapid-

ity and brilliancy. This clever test is performed as follows. The names are cut out of tin-foil and pasted on a sheet of clear glass, care being taken to connect each letter with the next. When all is ready, a wire from a powerful battery is connected with the beginning and terminal of the tin-foil, and a brilliant flash will light up all the lines for an instant. The battery may be concealed in a distant place, and two fine wires in the séance-room could be easily concealed. For the secret of this clever test I am indebted to Mr. E. D. Lunt, of Boston.

I now turn to a consideration of certain phenomena of materialization in which solid bodies, other than human beings, are produced in the séance-room, they being generally left there "by the spirits" as a proof of their objective reality. In all these cases, the séance is a dark one, and when the lights are turned up, certain objects are seen on the table of the séance-room which certainly were not there before, and the conclusion drawn is that the spirits brought them thither. The explanation generally offered is that the spirits dematerialized the objects, wherever they happened to be at the time, conveyed them in that semi-material, vaporous condition into the séance-room, and again "integrated" or materialized them there. This is the orthodox explanation for phenomena that are technically known as "apports."

Without now stopping to consider any *a priori* speculations as to the scientific possibility or impossibility of such a thing; the mere historic evidence in the case would certainly seem to point to the conclusion that fraud and nothing but fraud has been operative throughout, and is quite sufficient to account for all the phenomena observed (save in the case of W. S. Moses, perhaps, that stumbling-block to the rationalistic psychical researcher), in the presence of professional mediums. Only some mediums produced these phenomena; D. D. Home did not believe in them! Some famous historical cases are absurdly simple of explanation, as, *e. g.*, the "Great Materialized Stone," described on pp. 129-32 of Truesdell's *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts.* In fact *all* these

cases sift themselves down to the one primary consideration: could the medium, in spite of the searching, have introduced into the séance-room, unseen by his sitters, the objects materialized? On thinking the matter over, it will become apparent to my reader that this is, after all, the only question involved, and, in the face of the damning historical evidence, no less than because of the obvious simplicity of smuggling objects into the séance-room undetected, it must be admitted that the proof that these phenomena have *ever* occurred in a genuine manner is so remote as to hardly be worth serious consideration.

Take, *e. g.*, the cases where live creatures, fresh flowers, "with the dew still on them," etc., have been imported into the séance-room. If the séance is held in the medium's own house, the objects may very well be slipped into the séance-room through some trap door or sliding panel, such as will presently be described in full. Or the flowers may be contained in the hollow seat of some empty chair, sofa, etc., the medium simply securing them, when required, and spraying them with water to imitate dew before placing them on the table. At other times a confederate has the flowers hidden about his or her person. If the medium is not searched before the séance, his part is, of course, an easy one. Female mediums produce this class of phenomena much more frequently than males, their dress serving as a convenient hiding-place for many of the "apports" that appear later on. In any case, the flowers are obtained as fresh as possible, sprayed with water, and placed in a black cloth bag until wanted by the medium. It only remains to be said, in connection with this phenomenon of flower-production, that the flowers have frequently been traced by investigators to the shop where they were purchased, and it was thus proved beyond question that the medium had purchased them there but a short time before the séance! This fact failed to shake the belief of "the faithful," however, who still continued to believe in the medium's honesty, and to protest against such methods of "persecution!"

CHAPTER XIV

MATERIALIZATION (*Continued*)

I NOW turn to consider those cases of "full-form materialization," in which the medium is *seen*, securely bound, seated in his cabinet, when the materialized figures are walking about the room. I quote this description from *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, since it seems to me very fine indeed. The account reads, in part, as follows:

"Reader, have you ever attended a 'séance' for 'full-form materialization?' Have you ever thought you had met your dead relative's spirit at these 'séances?'

"If you have never had the pleasure of attending a séance of this 'phase' you have missed a rare treat. The writer has assisted at many a one and will relate to you some of the wonderful phenomena occurring at them and the means used to produce them. . . . There are hundreds of 'materializing mediums' doing business in this country, who are swelling a good-sized bank account. Their business sometimes runs into the hundreds of dollars in a single week. This 'phase' of mediumship is considered by the spiritualists as the highest possible attainable, and if you are a clever 'full-form medium' your financial welfare is assured. . . . Many and various are the methods employed by the different 'mediums' in producing this phase. It is in Boston, New York, and San Francisco that it is worked the finest. The full-form séances most often met with are very simply worked, and easy of performance by the medium. You are usually given a seat in a circle of chairs about the front of a 'cabinet' made by hanging heavy curtains across the cor-

ner of the room. If you are a stranger or one who looks or acts as though he would 'grab' the 'spirits,' you are seated at the farthest point from the cabinet; or, if there are two rows of seats, you will be given a seat in the back row. . . . Many persons recognize their friends in some of the 'make-ups' of the medium. The writer has masqueraded as a spirit scores of times and been recognized by three or four different persons at the same séance as brother or father and even mother!

"Very little apparatus is necessary to make several changes in your appearance in the dim light that is furnished you to investigate by. The one robe answers for forty spirits, and, with two or three wigs and beards of different shapes, the color amounts to nothing, as it is so dark you cannot distinguish red from any color save white; a crown, a cap or two, a piece of chalk, and you can, by changing your height by stooping, and getting on your knees to represent children, produce quite an army of spirits, each differing in appearance from any other.

"A large 'spirit' leading a child can be produced by the medium stepping out and holding at arms' length a piece of white robe cloth. She has no other white on the arm that is supporting the child. Her dress being dark and the curtain behind it dark, the arm is not seen and the child appears separate and apart from the large 'spirit.' Of course no handling is allowed, and, for all you can see, the shape is a child. The medium simulates child's talk and the child is supposed to have spoken.

"When there are present a very particular lot of sitters the medium allows the ladies to search her and takes off all her white skirts. The manager loads up with the apparatus, and after the light has been turned down, he either passes it inside as he sits in his chair, or the medium puts her hand out from underneath and takes it from under his coat. If he sit in an upholstered chair, there is no end to the apparatus she can lay her hands on. It is ready for her at any time after the chair is in its place, whether her manager is in it or not. Where an upholstered chair is used, the medium

can have several different costumes. No one thinks of searching the manager or chair.

"There are no such things as rubber spirits that are blown up, although many hundreds of persons think there are.[1] You frequently hear of spirits materializing from the floor, and again disappearing through the floor outside the cabinet. In this deception you will notice the floor is covered with a very dark carpet. When the medium desires to make her appearance through the floor she first puts on a glove that reaches her shoulder, and one that is about the same color as the carpet, or darker. She now takes in her hand a piece of the white netting that, when shaken out, is about three yards long and one yard or forty-two inches wide. This is easily concealed by the hand when it is rolled into a ball. She now gets down on the floor inside the cabinet with her head-gear on, and, crawling as far as the front of the curtains will permit, thrusts out her arm as far as she can reach in front of the cabinet and on the floor. Her hand and arm cannot be seen. The white netting will show when she turns her hand over, appearing a white spot. She begins to shake it loose and the spot appears to grow. She continues to shake and release the netting, raising her hand all the while, until it is about four feet high, when, with one big flounce, she darts from the cabinet and, pulling the netting about her, there is your spirit. If she desires to depart through the flood, she gets partially into the cabinet, and, getting hold of the netting so that she can dodge behind it, she suddenly raises it above her head-gear and dodges behind the curtains. She now allows the netting to drop to the floor and slowly gathers it into her hand, when she so suddenly takes it into the cabinet that, in the dim light, it seems to fade into the air.

"There are several methods of materializing a spirit from the floor, and the different ways will be given. The manner just described is very effective, and, in the dimly lighted room, is very well calculated to deceive. There are better

[1] This is a mistake. On p. 35 of his *Tricks in Magic* (Vol. I.), Mr. Burlingame describes a method of producing spirit-materialization in this manner. It is doubtless a method seldom or never used, however.

methods that will be described later on when writing of the séances of more skilful mediums.

"The séance just described is the work of the ordinary medium, one who is not at all clever, and who depends rather upon the gullibility of her 'sitters' than the excellence of her work to pull her through. She will get along and make money though, even if her work is raw and bungling.

"The writer has often been amazed that the mediums putting up this work should ever give a second séance in the same city. However, he was not looking with an unpractised eye or in ignorance of the methods and movements of the medium, and of course could see many things that the investigator would not observe. After all, it is not always the excellence of the work so much as the ignorance of the observer that makes many things appear wonderful. Persons who give this description of séance sometimes catch some very nice 'suckers.'

"What is meant is that some gentleman who is either wealthy or earning a large salary will become interested, and, finally convinced that 'spirits' do return and materialize, will be a constant attendant at the séances of this particular medium. When such a man is caught by the medium, plans are laid to relieve him of his wealth, or a goodly portion of it. The spirits give him to understand that they can work much better when he is present, and that the Princess So-and-so, his soul mate or affinity, is always at the séances to meet him. This affinity princess is supplied with an elegant costume that will glitter with tinsel and gems. She will wear a white crown (signifying purity) on the front of which blazes a star, indicative of the advanced sphere in which she exists in spirit life. This princess will conduct herself very much like an ordinary mortal, in the private séances she induces him to obtain from the medium, at twenty-five or more dollars per séance, at which time he is always welcomed with a royal kiss and embrace, and will sit on his lap a half-hour at a time, telling him of the beauties of spirit life, and the home they are to occupy together when he comes to her side of life. These loving actions are not always confined

to private séances, but the writer has been present when a gentleman met his royal spirit lover, and kisses and embraces were indulged in in the presence of a public circle of as many as twenty persons. He would call her 'pet,' 'darling,' 'sweetheart,' and other endearing names, until he made the writer most outrageously 'tired.' Others were 'tired,' too, judging from the smothered exclamations heard in various parts of the room.

"When he has arrived at the kissing and embracing point, he is ready to pluck. There are various ways of doing this. He is given to understand by the spirit lover that her 'medium' must have certain things that she will not herself purchase, in order that 'conditions' be made more perfect, for their communing together. No sooner is this left-handed request made, than a check is written and the 'spirit' sees to it that 'her medium' gets it. There are a great many things, now, found necessary to secure better conditions, and a great many checks written, ranging from ten to two or three hundred dollars. When he has been bled until he will stand it no longer, or has no more money, his princess tells him she must return to her heavenly sphere again, not to return for a number of years; or he is sent to Europe on a fool's errand, to find something or to take his place in her family. If it is the latter, he is, no doubt, speedily shown the door, and possibly kicked through it. The reader may think that such a thing has never transpired, but it has. The man, in this case, appeared a thorough gentleman, and was certainly educated and intelligent enough to make considerable money. He is now 'broke.' . . . These love-affairs between mortal and spirit have even gone on to a termination in marriage, an account of which will be given later on. The writer knows all the details of this case, as he was an acquaintance of one of the 'spirits' who brought it about, and also partook of the wedding supper that was given in honor of the occasion, at the bridegroom's expense. . . .

"It sometimes happens that the victim discovers the game that is being worked on him after he has been swindled out of hundreds or perhaps thousands of dollars. Does he ever

prosecute the medium or attempt to recover any of the money? Not one time in ten thousand. Why? Simply because he has a reputation to sustain. He is at the head of a large business and it would not do at all to have his escapade become public property. He has the reputation of being a brainy individual by hundreds of persons, and would rather give up twice the amount he has been swindled out of than to have his friends and business associates know what an ass he has made of himself. . . .[1]

"The reader is aware that the only difficulty the materializing medium encounters is the getting into the cabinet of the apparatus and costumes used. The manager and chair method has been described, but there are others. One of them is to make a trap in the base or mopboard and stow the apparatus behind it. . . . A small trap can be made in the floor and your carpet so laid that you can turn back enough of it to get at the trap. These traps will be described in detail later on.

"Another way is to have a small snare-drum in your cab-

[1] Another method of fraudulently obtaining money from a sitter is to persuade him that he possesses great "mediumistic power" — which should be developed. For these "developing séances" the sitter, of course, pays — all he can afford, in most cases.

"One of the most prolific sources of revenue for the dishonest medium," says Mr. Lunt (*Mysteries of the Seance*, p. 44), "is the 'development' scheme. Everywhere they go they find many persons who are easily persuaded to believe that they possess mediumistic gifts of a high order. In case some other medium has already told the person this — and it is rarely you can find one who has not been told so by nearly all the mediums he has consulted — it is not hard to convince him that, by proper development, he can acquire wonderful powers as a psychic. . . . Consequently he is induced to take 'development' sittings, which cost from fifty cents to five dollars per sitting, according to his anxiety and ability to pay. . . . He is kept on the string until he quits in disgust, or until the medium leaves town." The fact is that the medium has all the way from ten to five hundred or more persons developing at one time, in a certain town, and keeps them all "developing" until signs of dissatisfaction begin to manifest themselves in a large number of the sitters. Then, all at once, the sitters find that the medium has "skipped the town," — fled to pastures new,— and there is not a trace of his whereabouts to be found anywhere! He has set up the developing business in another town after first recommencing business as a medium, under another name. The methods that are often employed by mediums of this class will be found recorded in *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, pp. 214-16. The absurd directions that are given to the sitter will be found detailed in the Seybert Commission's *Report*, pp. 124-7.

inet for the use of your 'drum boy control.' In it can be kept all the laces and netting used by the medium.

"A small table is sometimes placed in one corner of the cabinet on which is kept slates and pencils, lead-pencils, writing-tablets, and a pitcher of water. This table contains a drawer that is locked, apparently, but the medium needs no key, for he or she enters it from below. This drawer, it is needless to say, contains all the apparatus needed. This table could also be very much in the way if you attempted to 'grab.'

"When the cabinet used is a closet, the most convenient place for a trap is the door-framing. You can take off the piece that makes the facing and hinge it so that it swings open from the floor to the top of the door, thus getting rid of a joint that may result in your detection.

"Now you will be treated to a description of a séance given by a male medium, and where you will get your money's worth. The manifestations in this case are the work of an artist in his line who is in the business for the money he can get, and is doing his best to give satisfaction. The medium is a member of the Brotherhood, and is sure to have the freshest of everything. The writer will describe the séance as though he were an investigator, and will assume the personality of one who received just what he will describe as occurring to himself. Afterward it will be explained to you so that it will not puzzle you to account for many things you have yourself witnessed or heard of others experiencing. . . .

"I made my way to the 'materializing séance,' at which my friends hoped to materialize. I was admitted to the séance-room and found about twenty persons already assembled. I was seated in the front row of chairs. The cabinet used was a closet about six feet long and four feet wide. The ceiling of both the room and the cabinet was of wood. After a thorough examination had been made of the cabinet by all those who cared to do so, the sitters were reärranged to suit the medium. There were present now thirty-five per-

sons. The séance-room was very large. The door had been taken off the closet that served as a cabinet, and in its stead were hung heavy curtains. The floor of the room was carpeted with a dark carpet, as was the cabinet. The light was furnished by a lamp placed in a box that was fastened to the wall some eight feet from the floor. This box had a sliding lid in front, controlled by a cord passing into the cabinet. By this means the ' spirits ' could regulate the light to suit themselves, without any movement on the part of any of those in the séance-room being necessary. When everything was in readiness the medium entered the cabinet, seated himself and was tied, and so secured to his chair that it was impossible that he could have any use of himself. He was most thoroughly secured to his chair, and his chair nailed fast to the floor by passing leather straps over the rounds in the side and nailing the ends to the floor. After it was shown to the sitters that he was utterly helpless, the curtain was drawn. The manager now placed an ordinary kitchen table in front of the door of the cabinet, so that it stood away from it about two feet. The table contained no drawer. On the table was laid writing material, a guitar, and small bell. The manager seated himself close to one side of the cabinet entrance, and started a large Swiss music-box. Before it had finished the first air the lamp was shut entirely off, making the room inky dark.

" An illuminated hand and arm was now seen to come from behind the curtain, and played an accompaniment to the music-box on the guitar. We could see plainly the movements of the hand, arm, and fingers, as it manipulated the strings of the instrument. It did not appear necessary to finger the strings on the keyboard, although the air was in a key that made it impossible to tune the guitar so that an accompaniment could be performed *without* fingering. However, but one hand was visible, and it was picking the strings. After the tune was finished, the hand left the instrument, and moved out into the room to the front of the table, and from the sound we knew it was writing on the tablet that had been placed there. The arm was of bluish light and

appeared to end just above the elbow, and to have no connection with the body. It finished writing and seemed to float into the cabinet near the top.

"The light was opened and the manager requested those who had tied the medium to examine his condition and see if the ropes had been tampered with. The examination was made and it was evident that the fastenings were undisturbed. The communication was read aloud to those present, and contained the following:

"'We are pleased to meet so many seekers after light and truth here this evening, and, from the conditions, as we sense them, we will have a satisfactory and pleasant séance. The way to obtain the best results is for each person to maintain a passive condition and take what we have to give. You may rest assured that our best efforts will be put forth to give you entire satisfaction. The Control.'

"The writing was exactly on the ruled lines although written in absolute darkness. The hand and arm, although luminous, did not give out a particle of light. The arm had been at least five feet from the cabinet opening and seven feet from the medium. Surely, it was not he. The message read, the light was again shut down and the music again started.

"Once more a hand appeared, and, floating out to the table, again began writing. Of a sudden the hand disappeared, and, after a few seconds, I was astonished to feel a hand thrusting a paper into my top coat pocket. Now appeared two hands and they played an air on the guitar. Now came three, then four hands were visible, bright as the day. Two of them began writing again, and, when they had finished, two more sitters were the recipients of sheets of paper. Soon the light was opened for an inspection of the cabinet, which was made, with the conclusion that the medium had not moved. Those of us receiving communications were afforded an opportunity to read them. We found them nicely written, as before, and all contained 'tests.' . . .

"After the light went out again, more hands were seen; the table was floated about, over the heads of the circle, as

was the music-box, which weighed at least fifty pounds. Another examination of the cabinet was made and everything found satisfactory. This time the light was not put entirely out, but a very dim light was allowed.

" The music-box was again set playing, and, while yet it was playing the first tune, a tall figure, robed in creamy white, with gleaming sparks in her hair, and on her head a sort of crown, issued from the cabinet. She was recognized by a gentleman present, a spiritualist, whose spirit guide she was, and who addressed her as ' my queen.' She stood a few seconds behind the table and then stepped out in the open space between the sitters and the table. The gentleman now arose from his seat and, standing beside her, holding her hand, conversed in a whisper with her for some seconds.

" This was most assuredly a lady, if appearances go for anything. Her hands were quite small, and were warm and lifelike, as several, including myself, can testify, having been permitted to shake hands with her. At last she started to the cabinet, and, as she went, appeared to grow shorter, until, as she disappeared between the curtains, she was not much taller than the table. The manager now explained that the spirit had remained out rather too long and came near dematerializing before she reached the cabinet. Now came the spirit of a young man, dressed in a light suit of clothes, who gave his name and said his mother was present. She was, and had a few words of conversation with him when he disappeared into the cabinet. The lady said that it was unmistakably her son; but there was *something* that was not as he had been, but what it was she was unable to describe.

" The next spirit to present itself was my son Eddie. He came out from the cabinet calling ' Papa, papa.' The manager asked ' Who is your papa? ' and he replied, ' Mr. (Smith).' All this time he stood between the table and the cabinet, and only his head and shoulders could be seen. The manager told him to step out where he could be seen, when he came around to the front of the table.

" It was rather dark, but I could swear it was my son. He was just the right size, with long flaxen hair and a very pale

face. He wore a light-colored waist and darker knee-breeches and stockings, with a large black bow at his throat, just as I remember seeing him last in health.

"While Eddie was still standing in front of the table a large man came out and took him by the hand. Eddie spoke, saying:

"'Must I go back, grandpa?' The form turned toward me, saying:

"'My son, this is a great pleasure to us, but we must not long remain, as it is our first attempt at materializing.' He turned to go when the manager said to him:

"'If the gentleman is your son you ought to give him your name.'

"'The name of the child is Eddie, and my own is J. A. Smith,' replied the form, as they vanished into the cabinet.

"The manager suggested that it would be well to examine and see whether the medium had been out or not. The cabinet was examined and everything found satisfactory.

"Spirit after spirit came from the cabinet, one or two at a time for an hour; some of them came to friends, and others were 'controls' of the medium. Many of them were recognized by different ones of the sitters in the room. I, for one, could swear to the identity of my own son Eddie, while my father was plainly recognizable. . . .

"The room was again made dark. Suddenly there appeared on the floor, in front of the table, a light about as large as a baseball. It moved about in a circle of perhaps a foot in diameter and grew larger. It soon lost the shape of a ball and appeared to be a luminous cloud. Seemingly we could see into and through it. In the course of thirty seconds it had become as large as a six-year-old child; still there was no definite shape, only a fleecy cloud-like mass, turning, twisting, and rolling. At the end of perhaps a minute it was the size and shape of an adult person. The face could not be seen, but light, luminous spots were visible as though the hair and ears were decorated with gems. The shape spoke and requested light. As the light was turned on the luminousness disappeared, and we beheld a beauti-

ful young lady clothed in a dazzling white costume. Her arms and shoulders were bare, and about her neck there was a necklace of what appeared to be very brilliant diamonds. Her feet were encased in white slippers, with straps across the instep. In her ears and hair glistened and shimmered beautiful diamonds. Her face and arms were as alabaster, and altogether she was one of the most beautiful women I had ever beheld. She was recognized by a lady and gentleman present as their daughter. They had met her here before. They were from the East, and were wealthy. The spirit requested that they come to her, which they did, and were each kissed and embraced by it. They held a moment's conversation with her and resumed their seats, when the lamp was slowly turned down. As the light became dim the spirit became luminous. The face and arms disappeared and the body became as a cloud again, turning and twisting and growing smaller until it was nothing but a small light spot on the carpet, which of a sudden disappeared entirely.

"Immediately after this manifestation an examination of the medium and cabinet was made, and it was certain the medium had not been away from his chair. The light was again turned out and the music-box started, when *two* bright spots appeared on the carpet, one at either end of the table. These went through the same process of development until, when the light was turned on, there was another beautiful female spirit at one end of the table, and a child of perhaps eight years of age at the other. The child was recognized by a lady present as her daughter, while the adult spirit was recognized and rapturously greeted by a gentleman who sat near me on my left, as his 'darling angel guardian.' They had quite a long conversation, in which they made use of very endearing language, each to the other. I supposed it was the gentleman's wife. . . .

"These spirits did not disappear as the first one had, but, when the light had been turned off, the luminous shape revolved a few times, and on two occasions assumed the garb and shape of men, and when the light was turned on again, there stood the men with beards and men's forms. After

some eight or ten of these materializations and dematerializations, before our eyes, the last couple completely disappeared.

"The light was again turned down and a luminous shape came from the cabinet, followed by others, until seven of them stood on the floor. The light was turned up until we could see the seven spirits. Five were females and two males. They were of different sizes. The curtain at the door of the cabinet was pulled aside and *we could see the medium sitting in the chair in which he was bound.* The forms now filed into the cabinet again, while the music-box played. After they had disappeared the light was turned up, an investigation made of the cabinet, and the séance was over.

"There, reader, is a truthful description of what can be witnessed at the séances of mediums who are artists. None of your bungling, amateur work here. The work of such a medium is always satisfactory for the reason that if a man feels *sure* that the medium is a fraud, he has been so well entertained that he does not regret the money paid for the opportunity to witness it. This is the class of medium also, who frequently succeed in getting large sums of money from wealthy persons they have converted to spiritualism.

"Did the writer not give you the true explanation of the manner in which these things were produced, you would probably say it was conceived by a very fertile imagination. If you believed that he saw these things you would perhaps offer the preacher's explanation, by saying, 'it is the work of the devil;' or that of the scientist, by asserting that 'it is the mesmerist's power over your mind;' or 'the operator has discovered an odd force in nature;' or go off on a long dissertation on hypnotism and fourth dimension of space problems. However, it is not the work of the devil, neither are there any but *natural* laws necessary to its production.

"The séance described actually occurred and was described in writing by Mr. Smith in the language used, although it was not printed, and the writer was one of those

who assisted in its production. He will now proceed to explain this particular séance. . . .

"It will be remembered that the room and cabinet were carpeted with a dark carpet, and that the ceilings were of wood. The ceilings were decorated by being put on in panels. The ceiling of the cabinet would not have been like that of the room had the closet been a part of the architect's plans of the house. It was not, but was made by the medium. He simply built a lath and plaster partition from the corner of a wide chimney to the wall, thus inclosing a space of six by four feet. The panel in the ceiling of the closet was twenty inches square. This panel was 'doctored' and could be displaced, leaving an aperture large enough for the 'spooks' to get through with perfect ease. A light ladder which reached within three feet of the floor of the cabinet was hooked fast above and furnished the means of getting down and up again. There were eight persons connected with the séance described by Mr. Smith, seven upstairs and the medium in the cabinet. Of course it was not necessary that the medium get out of his fastenings, and the facts are that he did *not*. The table was placed across the cabinet door, not to lay the instruments on, but to be very much in the way should any one make a rush and 'grab' for the materialized forms. In case this occurred, the 'spooks' above would close the light, making the room perfectly dark, and the manager would do his utmost to turn the table on end, or side, with the legs out in the room. Before the 'grabber' could get the lay of things and get past it, the spooks would have gone through the trap, closed it, pulled up the ladder, and the 'grabber' would have found the medium writhing and groaning and bleeding from the mouth. The bleeding was for effect, and was caused by sucking very hard on his teeth or gums.

"The table also served a convenient purpose in the materialization and dematerialization through the floor. You now know where the spooks came from, in this particular house, and how they got in and out. Now let us see how they managed the materializations, and the properties used to

produce them. The trap and ladder were practically noiseless in their operations, but the music-box made assurance doubly sure that the least sound from the cabinet should not be heard in the séance-room.

"When the box began its first air the trap-door was opened and down the ladder came a young man clad in a suit of black tights. He was entirely covered with black with the exception of his right arm, which was bare to a point a little more than half-way from the elbow to his shoulder. The bare arm glowed with a luminous bluish light.

"This condition of things was brought about by powdering his arm with pulverized luminous paint. If you are not told the method of transforming the sticky paint to powder, you will not be able to do it, and will conclude the writer was romancing in this case. The most essential thing to you will be to know where you can procure this paint. The writer has been unable to procure it anywhere, except of Devoe & Co., of New York City. It is put up in a package resembling six-ounce jelly glasses, and you will get six of them for five dollars. In order to reduce it to powder, thin the contents of one of the glasses with one pint of turpentine. When it is thoroughly cut and incorporated into the turpentine, soak strips of muslin in it and hang them out to dry. When thoroughly dry you can shake the powder from the cloth. In order to powder one of your arms, gather one of the cloths in your hands, and use it as a powder-puff on your arm. You will not be able to get all the paint out, but the pieces will make luminous crowns, slippers, stars, and luminous decorations for your robes. You will be under the necessity of perfuming your robes each time they are used, for the odor of the turpentine will always remain to a greater or less degree. To illuminate a robe or costume (the mediums always say 'robe') you proceed the same as in the powdering process, except that to the pint of paint you will add a wine-glass full of Demar varnish, which will prevent its falling or being shaken off as powder. You are not to make the robe of muslin, but of white netting. Every lady will know what netting is. It is the lightest, thinnest

material the writer ever saw sold in a dry goods store. Ten yards of it can be put into the vest pocket. Do not scrimp the material, but get as much of it into your robe as possible.

"When he of the luminous arm steps from the cabinet into the dark room no part of him is visible save the arm. He picked the strings of the instrument with the illuminated hand and fingered the keyboard with the other. He makes a sound of writing on the tablet and tears off a leaf which he conceals, and, drawing a long black stocking over the luminous arm, places in the pocket of the sitter a communication that had been written up-stairs in a good light. This accounts for the even, beautiful writing, supposed to have been done in the dark. He covers the luminous arm so that any one so inclined could not locate it in order to 'grab' when he is near enough. By mounting the table, that luminous hand and arm can be made to show as though it was floating about near the ceiling.

"When four hands were visible there were two spooks at work with both arms illuminated. . . . You can readily understand the forces that floated the music-box and table above the heads of the sitters, and an explanation is useless.

"When the first female spirit appeared it was, in reality, a young woman, dressed in a gorgeous white costume without paint, hence the light was turned up instead of down, in order that she be visible. Rhinestones and Sumatra gems being cheap, she was plentifully supplied with 'diamonds,' although many of those who are the queens or spirit guides or 'controls' of wealthy spiritualistic fanatics wear real diamonds, the gift of their wealthy charge, or 'king,' as they usually call them.

"When she started for the cabinet she used her hands to keep her robe from under her feet, and as she went stooped lower and lower, until, as she disappeared in the cabinet, she went on her hands and knees. This is what caused the appearance of 'dematerialization.'

"When Mr. Smith's son, Eddie, came from the cabinet, he was represented by a boy of about eight years of age, the son of one of the female 'spooks' up-stairs. He receives two

dollars a night for his services, the same as the larger spooks. He was powdered until he was very white, a blond wig put over his own hair, and dressed as most boys are at the age Mr. Smith's son died. Mr. Smith recognized him by his size, his light complexion, and flaxen hair, and the fact that he called him 'papa,' and gave his correct name. His father was 'made up' from the description given by the medium, and acknowledged by Mr. Smith as correct. Of course he knew his own name, for it was given him by the slate-writer. . . .

"We now come to a part of the phenomena that all spiritualists who have witnessed it will swear by. What is referred to is the materializing and dematerializing of the spirit from the floor and before your eyes. In this you see first a small light, which grows larger and larger, until there stands before you a fully formed female or male spirit, as was described in Mr. Smith's experience.

"In order to accomplish what he witnessed, the same spook who had before been recognized by a gentleman as 'his queen,' prepared herself in the following way. Divesting herself of all clothing she donned simply a long chemise that reached her shoe tops. She drew on a pair of white stockings, and over them a pair of white slippers. Into her hair and ears she put rhinestone diamonds, and around her neck a necklace of the same beautiful but valueless stones. On each ear-lobe and around her neck were put small spots of the luminous powder to represent the diamonds while it was dark. Her face was powdered and her eyebrows and eyelashes darkened, while a dark line was drawn under each eye. She now took a black mask that covered her head, and her 'robe' in her hands, and went down to the cabinet. Arriving there, she put the black mask over her head, to prevent the luminous diamonds being seen until the proper time. She carried her robe in a black bag. Crawling from between the curtains and under the table, she exposed on the floor a small part of her robe. This she shook and moved about, allowing it to escape from the bag until it was all out. She was now from under the table and on her knees, and it was

time the head show on the form, so, getting close to the robe, she threw off and under the table the black mask. The shape was now the size of an adult; she adjusted the robe to her person, and rapped for light. As a matter of course, when any light was made the luminousness of the robe was drowned, and she appeared in simply a white costume. The necklace and ear-drops could now be seen, but when the light was such as to reveal them, the luminous spots had disappeared, leaving the spectator to think the ones he now saw were the ones he had seen in the dark. The process of dematerialization will now be apparent, and a description will only tire the reader. One small spook was all that was required, as he could be made to represent boy or girl as was desired, by clothing him in the garments of either sex.

"At the close of the séance, the full force of 'spooks' came into the room. After disappearing, they shinned up the ladder, drew it after them, closed the panel and the trap in the floor above it, replaced the carpet and pushed over the place a heavy bedstead from which they took the castors. They now carried the ladder down-stairs and concealed it in the coal-house as they went through it on their way home. They will get their pay next day.

"Should ever so close an examination of the cabinet be made, you would not find anything wrong. This particular medium has taken investigators into the cellar beneath the cabinet, and the room above it, scores of times, yet nothing was discovered.

"You are not always to search for the trap in the ceiling, nor yet in the floor. A trap is not possible in the ceiling except a closet is used as 'cabinet,' and the ceiling is of wood. Where this condition of things does not exist, you must search elsewhere. The floor is a very likely place when it cannot be made in the ceiling. If you do not find it there, examine the base or mopboard. If it is in the mopboard you will find, upon examination, that there is a joint in it near the corner of the cabinet, but you will find it solidly nailed with about four nails each side of the joint. This

appearance of extraordinary solidity will be absolute proof that it is *not* solid.

"The nails are not what they appear, but are only pieces about one-half inch in length, and do not even go through the board. The piece is fastened on the other side with a couple of bolts that hold it very firmly in place. There is a corresponding opening in the mopboard in the next room, although no attempt is made to so carefully conceal it, as no one is ever admitted to it. Through this trap the 'spooks' enter the cabinet by crawling and wiggling. It is not a very desirable trap, for the mopboard is scarcely ever wide enough to permit of a trap that the spook could get through in a hurry; besides, they must assume their costumes after they get into the cabinet or tear them to pieces. You can see how this would make it very inconvenient.

"If the room is wainscoted the spook will have all the sea-room necessary in his trap, for it will extend from just below the moulding on the top of the wainscoting to the floor behind the strip of quarter-round. . . .

"It is next to an impossibility to detect these traps by examining in the cabinet. They were constructed to avoid discovery, and no pains spared to make them so absolutely perfect that not one chance in a million is taken. The proper place to seek for traps is in the adjoining room, up-stairs, or in the cellar. One is foolish to undertake to find a trap by thumping the walls or floor; for, if you happen to thump one, the medium who is smart enough to make use of a trap is also sharp enough to make provision for its being thumped, and your sounding method goes for naught.[1] Bear in mind

[1] It must be remembered that it is occasionally possible for the medium to do away with traps altogether, either by having a confederate in the audience who produces all the phenomena — the medium sitting bound meanwhile — or by some such simple device as the following. Suppose the séance-room is closed at one end by a pair of folding doors; these doors are locked, the key kept by a member of the audience, while the keyhole is sealed, and strips of gummed paper are also stretched across the crack between the doors, sealing them firmly together. Confederates enter the room, in this case, by merely pushing *both* doors to one side, they being so constructed that this is possible. A small space is now left around the end of *one* door, through which the medium's confederate creeps!

that when you are examining the cabinet, you are seeking at the very place that is prepared most effectually to withstand your investigations. . . . Do not forget the *manager* in your search. He or she is never searched, or never has been up to date, which has been the cause of many a failure to find the 'properties' of the medium when the séance was given in a room and cabinet furnished by a stranger and skeptic. Do not be deceived into a belief that all of the sitters are strangers to the medium. There may be from one to five persons present who pay their money the same as yourself, and who may appear to be the most skeptical of any one in the room. They will generally be the recipients of some very elegant 'tests,' and weep copiously great grief-laden tears when they recognize the beloved features of some relative.

"They are the most careful of investigators, and, when the medium's trap is located in the door-jamb, will pound the walls, and insist on the carpet being taken up, when they will get upon their hands and knees and make a most searching examination of the floor. They are the closest and most critical of investigators, but they are very careful to examine everywhere *except where the defect is located.* Because one or two men seem to be making such a critical investigation, do not allow that fact to prevent you making one on your own responsibility. Wait until they have finished and then examine not only where they did, but more particularly where they did *not.* Their examination is only for the purpose of misleading others. Their 'tests' are received in a way to cause those about them to think they admit them very unwillingly, or because they were so undeniable that they could do nothing else.

"A great many will probably deny that confederates are ever employed. They are not, by mediums who are not smooth enough to produce that which appears so wonderful as to make a good business for them. The writer would advise those mediums who give such rank séances to employ a few floor-workers (they are easily obtained), and see what a difference it would make in the amount of business they

will do. Get good ones, those who know human nature, and know when they have said all that is necessary. Most of them are inclined to say too much, thus causing the ordinary man to suspect that they are confederates."

CHAPTER XV

SEALED-LETTER READING

The methods of obtaining a knowledge of the contents of a sealed letter, or a folded piece of paper, containing a written question, — "one that has never left the writer's possession," — are so numerous and so ingenious that it is small wonder that the public is deceived into believing that the phenomena cannot, in many cases, be produced by fraudulent means, since the same test need never be given twice to the same sitter unless he is a frequent caller or attendant at the séances, and this is one great reason for the medium's success — the fact that the sitter goes prepared to detect the medium in some certain act of fraud, which he suspects, as the result, perhaps, of the last séance. When he arrives, and receives the sought-for information, therefore, he finds that the medium did not practise fraud of the kind suspected at all, and consequently goes away more convinced than ever of the genuine character of the phenomena observed, and the medium's supernormal powers. I shall, in the present chapter, endeavor to give a complete exposé of the varied methods and systems employed to find out the contents of the sitter's paper or letter, beginning with the simplest cases, and gradually working up to the most complex. Let us first consider those cases where a question is written on a piece of paper, which is then folded up, and in due time the medium tells its contents to the sitter.

The simplest method of doing this is to make use of a prepared pad. The medium hands to his sitter, or there is handed to him by an assistant, a pad of paper, with the request that he (the sitter) shall write a question on the pad,

tear off the sheet on which this question is written, and, after carefuly folding it up, place it in his pocket. The pad is meanwhile returned to the medium's table. In due course of time the medium tells the sitter the contents of the paper "which has never left his possession for an instant!" Indeed, that is the case, but the trick is very simply worked, nevertheless.

The pad is previously prepared by placing a piece of carbon-paper between two sheets, a certain distance from the top. If the carbon sheet is placed (say) between the third and fourth sheets of paper, it is not exposed to view when the top sheet is torn from the pad, but the impression is left on the fourth sheet of paper, nevertheless. The medium has only to gain possession of the pad, and examine this sheet, in order to find out the question written on the top sheet. The rest is plain sailing.

But, you say, you have sometimes examined the pad, and this carbon sheet has not been present? Very likely! The same result may be produced by other means with far greater safety, so why should it be? In these cases, the medium has prepared the under side of one sheet of his pad (say, the fourth) with a preparation of paraffine. This is invisible against the paper, and the pad may be examined without any chance of its secret being discovered. Sometimes soap is used, and answers the purpose equally as well. When, now, the pad is written upon, the pencil causes the paraffine or soap sheet to mark upon the one below it, these marks corresponding to the writing upon the top sheet. The page of the pad which receives the impression is detached and sprinkled with soft black powder, when the writing comes out clearly. Sometimes a sheet of glass is handed to the sitter, instead of a pad, and he places the two or three pieces of paper upon the glass to write the question. This is done to prove to the sitter that no prepared pad is used! As a matter of fact, the bottom sheet, the one in contact with the glass, is prepared in the manner described, and the impression is taken on the glass instead of the sheet of paper, just below the one prepared. The result is the same as

before. Sometimes the medium simply hands to his sitter a pad and pencil, about either of which there is no trickery or preparation. How is it done? The medium takes care that the pencil is a very *hard* one, and that the paper of the pad is very *soft*. The sitter is forced to press rather hard, in order to obtain any impression on the top sheet, and, when he does so, he unconsciously marks the second sheet of the pad also.

We now come to another class of tests, in which the sitter writes his question on his own piece of paper, which is afterward folded up and placed in his pocket, the medium telling him the contents of the paper, nevertheless. The following are some of the methods employed to produce this result.

The sitter, having written his question on a small slip of paper, folds this latter up into a small compass, and is requested by the medium to place it against his (own) forehead and to concentrate his thoughts upon its contents. The medium also sits with closed eyes. As, however, the medium does not seem to "see" very clearly on this occasion, he requests the sitter to let him place the pellet against his own forehead for a few moments, in order to "get the impression more clearly." The unsuspecting sitter hands over his pellet to the medium, who (apparently) places it against his forehead and remains in that position for some time. At the end of this period of "concentration," he hands back to the sitter his pellet, who again holds it to his forehead, or places it in his pocket. If the latter, he is more liable than not to assert that he placed it in his pocket *immediately* upon writing out the question, and that it never left his hands for a single instant! In due course of time, the medium tells his sitter the contents of his paper, and probably gives him an answer to the question it contained, possibly also displaying such a marvellous familiarity with the sitter's affairs, in that answer, that the sitter is altogether carried away by it, and inclined to believe that the *whole* of the séance must be genuine, because the information contained in the answer could not have been known to the medium, even if he had, by some means, succeeded in fraudulently opening the paper

and reading its contents. How the medium acquired this detailed information about his sitter, I shall explain presently (pp. 312-18); for the present, I give merely the means employed by the medium to secure a knowledge of the contents of the written-upon paper.

The whole secret lies in the fact that the medium quietly exchanged or *substituted* one paper pellet for another, when his sitter allowed him to place his (the sitter's) pellet against his forehead. In one hand the medium has palmed a duplicate pellet, resembling as much as possible the one his sitter wrote. In the act of transferring the pellet to his own forehead, the medium simply substitutes the one in his own hand (*v.* Fig. XX., p. 284), and holds *that* one against his forehead, while, with his disengaged hand, which he allows to drop beneath the surface of the table, he opens and reads the pellet his sitter handed him. In handing the pellet back to the sitter, the medium again substitutes the pellets, returning to the sitter the one he originally had and wrote. The trick is now done, for the sitter has his own pellet back again, and the medium is possessed of the information he desired. This is an old trick, but a method still in very general use.

A method that is sometimes used in public "test séances" is the following. The medium has written and sent up to him a number of questions on separate slips of paper, and these are all piled before him on the table. He picks up one of these, puts it to his forehead, and, after more or less hesitation, tells its contents. It is acknowledged as correct by some member of the audience, and the medium immediately opens the paper, and verifies the fact that he has given the message correctly. The next pellet is picked up and the contents read in like manner, until all the pellets have been read in turn. This test is very convincing, when well performed.

The secret consists in the fact that the medium has a confederate in the audience, the contents of whose pellet he already knows. This pellet is marked, so that the medium can distinguish it from all the others in the pile. He picks up any pellet in the heap *but* his confederate's, and holds it against his forehead. After a time, he reads aloud the con-

tents of the *confederate's slip,* which that person acknowledges as correct. As soon as he has done so, the medium opens the pellet, ostensibly to ascertain if he has read its contents correctly, — thereby gaining a knowledge of the contents of *that* pellet, which he reads as the contents of the *next* one, and so on, throughout the entire pile, the medium keeping "one ahead" all the time and reading each ballot in turn. If the letters are sealed, the same method may still be used, the medium breaking the seals and opening the letters, "to see if he is correct" — thereby ascertaining the contents of that letter. I suggested a similar dodge, for reading the numbers of watches, in *Mahatma,* Vol. III., No. 7 (January, 1900).

I shall now describe a very popular test-reading of ballots, one more frequently employed, perhaps, than any other. All over the country there are mediums who are giving public readings of folded papers, usually in connection with a religious service. In such cases, the members of the audience bring their questions with them already written out and folded or sealed up, and these papers are collected and placed in a basket on the table or "altar" in front of the medium. After a certain length of time has elapsed in the "invocation," or opening prayer, and other parts of the service, the reading and answering of the paper pellets is begun, and more or less successfully accomplished.

The contents of these slips of paper can be obtained in a number of ways. Confederates can be employed for one thing, and are certainly scattered about through the audience in almost every public séance. These confederates receive the most wonderful tests of all, for the simple reason that they are paid to acknowledge as correct everything the medium says. Then again the medium frequently has the opportunity to open and read these pellets in the very process of manipulation, even assuming that the medium has had no chance to handle or see them before. The task of opening and reading pellets in this manner is not a very difficult feat, certainly not so hard as when a single sitter is across the table from the medium, and watching him intently,

since, in the former case, the medium has the added advantage of distance, and is enabled to move about, make gestures, divert attention, etc., in many ways that would be considered suspicious in a "single sitting." Yet we know that the "single sitter" can be deceived by this very feat, and the public performance becomes easier to comprehend in consequence.

If the medium is working alone he is enabled to manipulate the paper pellets so as to open and read them, in his movements across and about the stage, distracting the attention from the hand that is doing the work meanwhile by waving the other arm, pointing with the fingers, quick remarks, causing the audience to turn and look at some person by a question addressed to him; or he can manage to see what is inside the folded papers while in the act of folding and holding up to the forehead other papers, the disengaged hand opening the pellets, and they being read by the medium under the bandage which is so placed across his eyes that downward sight is possible. It is impossible to describe the actual process on paper, since it doubtless differs with each medium, but the general plan must be much the same in all cases.

By far the safer plan, however, and the one usually employed, is for the medium, or some of his or her assistants, to have the opportunity of handling the pellets before the "service" begins, and so for the medium to be in full possession of their contents before going on to the platform at all. The pellets are gathered up by attendants, and placed in a basket on the "altar." Before doing so, however, the pellets are taken behind the scenes, opened and read, their disappearance being unnoticed for the reason that *duplicate* pellets are placed upon the "altar" in the basket, and the originals resubstituted at an advantageous moment. It must be remembered that the interval of time occupied in holding the religious service was not for nothing, but was profitably employed by the medium and his or her assistants in opening, reading, and resubstituting the pellets of paper gath-

ered in from the audience. In all these note-reading tests, the same method is rarely used throughout and invariably. The methods are changed, in most cases, so soon as the one used becomes known or even suspected.

Mr. Lunt gives an ingenious variation of this test in his *Mysteries of the Séance*, pp. 8-9. In this case, the medium has no confederate, but the ballots are collected and placed on the table, as before. The medium now steps up to the table and mixes the ballots, apparently in a careless way. "While doing so she takes care to palm one or more. Some skeptic in the audience is then requested to step up and see if the ballots are all properly folded. While he is doing this, she (the medium) manages to open and read the palmed ones. Then, the platform being cleared, she 'sees' some names or messages 'written in the air,' perhaps (the ones she has just read in the palmed ballots). Then she remarks, 'We will now try to find that ballot.' She steps up to the table, and picks up the ballots one by one until a rap is heard, asking with each, 'Is this it?' Of course it is easy, while doing this, to drop the palmed ballots into the pile. These she keeps watch of and finally picks up one, when three loud raps are heard. Then the ballots are handed, still folded, to some one in the audience to read out loud, so all can hear. The ballot proves to be the one she 'saw in the air,' and then she is applauded."

One is never sure, in a public performance, how many confederates the medium has employed and stationed in various parts of the hall. These confederates are told to acknowledge, as true, whatever the medium states is within the pellet or envelope, and these persons naturally receive the most wonderful "tests." *Their* questions are sometimes brought to the performance already tightly sealed in envelopes, and they receive answers to their questions. None of the other sitters do, however, who have brought questions sealed in this manner, unless the conditions are fulfilled which would enable the medium to gain knowledge of the contents of this letter. The ways of doing this will be presently detailed.

There are various devices of a more or less complicated

nature that enable the medium to gain a knowledge of the contents of a paper that the sitter has written a question upon. One of the most ingenious of these is a trick-table. It has a hollow leg, which fits over a hole in the floor of the room, and communicates with the room below. The top of the table is covered with (1) a piece of thin silk, (2) a piece of carbon-paper, the size of the top of the table, placed over the silk, and (3) a very thin oilcloth covering, stretched tightly over the top of the table. To one corner of the silk is attached a thread, and this passes down to the room below, through the hollow leg of the table.

When the sitter is seated at the table, the medium hands him *one* sheet of paper and a pencil, with the request that he (the sitter) write a question on the paper, and immediately fold it up and place it in his pocket. Meanwhile, the medium leaves the room, "so that he shall not see what the sitter is writing upon his piece of paper." The sitter writes the question, as directed, and after folding up the paper, places it in his pocket. No sooner has he done so, however, than the medium returns to the room, and astonishes the sitter by informing him of the contents of the paper in his pocket!

As may be imagined, the trick is worked by means of the table, and in this way. The sitter, having only *one* sheet of paper in his hands, and having no solid substance against which to press this, naturally places the paper on the table and writes his question in that manner. The pressure of the pencil, pressing upon the carbon-sheet, makes a copy of the question on the silk sheet underneath it, and the medium has only to pull the string attached to the corner of this silk sheet, to pull it off the table and down into the room below. There he is enabled to read the question, and, on going back to the séance-room, he can astonish his sitter by telling him what is on the folded-up paper in his pocket. This is an extremely effective test.

I now give a method that has probably been employed more frequently than any other in the whole range of tests that deal with sealed-letter reading. The medium hands his

sitter an envelope and a small card, requesting him to write any question he likes on the card, and immediately seal up the envelope in any way he sees fit. There is no trick about the envelope or card, which may be the sitter's own, if desired. The medium then takes the envelope and places it against some article on his table where it can remain in full view of the audience throughout the séance. The medium does not touch the envelope after this, but he knows its contents, nevertheless, and there has been no substitution, as may be proved by an examination of the seals on the envelope.

Since the card is sealed in the envelope in this case, so that it would be impossible to abstract it without detection, the medium makes use of a simple device that renders the envelope temporarily *transparent*. In order to accomplish this without detection, the medium makes use of a small sponge *wet with alcohol*, which is palmed in his right hand. As soon as he receives the envelope in his hand, he wets the surface with the concealed sponge, on the way to his table. This renders the face of the envelope quite transparent for the time being, and the medium is enabled to read what is written on the enclosed card. Nothing will do to wet the paper but alcohol. Nothing else will dry out quickly enough and leave the paper unwrinkled. Water will render the envelope transparent, but will crinkle the paper, and will not dry out quickly enough either. In order to hide the wet side of the envelope while it is drying, the medium stands the envelope against some object on his table with this side turned *from* the spectators. He asserts that he does this, however, "so that they may see the seals on the back of the envelope throughout the séance."

Of course the medium has to make sure that his sitter places the card in the envelope with the *written side* toward the front or *face* of the envelope, and not toward the sealed side or back. He accomplishes this by holding open the envelope for his sitter to place the card in it, and naturally holds it face downward (*v.* Fig. XXI., p. 284). The sitter, in order to prevent the medium from reading what is written

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig 22.

Fig. 23

upon the card, is therefore forced, from the nature of things, to place it in the envelope written side *down*, and this brings the writing against the face of the envelope. After the medium has seen that the card is placed safely in the envelope in this position, he allows the sitter to do the rest of the sealing, etc., himself, since the manner of the fastening is of no further interest to him. A very fine way of working this test is described in the *Open Court Magazine* for April, 1906.

There is another method of obtaining a knowledge of the card that is placed in an envelope which is even simpler and bolder than the last method; the only disadvantage is that the envelope cannot be examined, in this case, as it could in the last experiment. A card is written upon, as before, and placed in the envelope, which is then sealed as securely as the sitter may desire. The "clairvoyant faculties" of the medium enable him to discover the question on the card, nevertheless. The envelope, in this case, is prepared by cutting a slit in the face, and just below the opening of the envelope. This side is never shown to the sitter. When the card is placed in the envelope (*v.* Fig. XXII., p. 284), the medium pushes it into the opening *and then out through this slit into his hand*, where it is palmed (*v.* Fig. XXIII.). The envelope may then be sealed as much as desired. The only objection to this method is the fact that the envelope cannot be examined after the sitting; but the medium may avert this difficulty by suggesting to his sitter, in the first place, that the envelope be sealed to the table, "in order to show," he explains, "that the envelope is not substituted for any other during the séance!" His *real* object is to conceal the fact that the envelope has been "doctored," for, once it has been sealed down in this manner, it cannot be removed without destroying all traces of tampering with its face.

Sometimes the sitter, on opening the envelope containing his question, is surprised to find an answer thereto written on the inside of the same envelope as that in which his question is placed. This is a very surprising test, and is worked as follows. In the ordinary make of envelope, it will be found

that the under or bottom side is very frequently badly gummed, and can be opened with very little trouble. This side the medium proceeds to pry open with a fine penknife. He separates the edges a trifle, at the bottom, and then inserts a small lead-pencil into the opening thus made, and, by rolling this carefully along toward the centre of the envelope, he is enabled to separate the flap without much difficulty. On a small slip of paper the medium has prepared a message written in reverse (mirror-writing), and with copying pencil. This slip is then inserted into the envelope, through the slit, and shaken into place. Now, the medium rubs over the surface of the envelope, outside this slip, first placing a piece of paper between the envelope and the fingers, so that no mark is left. The writing is transferred to the inside of the envelope, where it will appear as regular writing. The slip may now be withdrawn, the lower flap of the envelope moistened and restuck, and the trick is done.

The above method will illustrate a point that it is very important the investigator should keep in mind, which is that, because an envelope is usually opened by raising the *top* flap, it *need* not be so opened, but any one of the three remaining sides may be opened just as well, and in fact, frequently far more easily than the top flap, as the gum is of an inferior quality. In sealing envelopes, therefore, the other two seams should receive just as careful attention as the two top seams, and be just as carefully sealed. It is no "test condition" at all to bring an envelope to the medium which has only *these* seams securely sealed.

Great care must always be exercised that the envelope handed the medium is really opaque, as it is astonishing to find what thickness of paper may sometimes be seen through by purely normal means, as the result of a careful examination. It might be possible to utilize the embryoscope, or "egg-glass," to read through several thicknesses of paper. A famous German scientist is said to have found that he could, by its aid, read through eight layers of opaque paper. It is possible that mediums make use of this device on occa-

sion, in order to gain a knowledge of the contents of a given letter.

A trick that is sometimes employed in order that the medium may become possessed of the knowledge of what is written on a certain slate, *e. g.*, is the following. The medium makes use of a specially prepared table, in the top of which there is a trap cut slightly smaller than the slate he intends to use. The inside of the table is fitted with a series of mirrors that enable the medium to see the under side of the trap-door from where he sits, without changing his position. When the message is written on the slate, this is placed on the table, just over the trap mentioned, and, of course, written side down, and the medium then presses a spring which releases the door and allows it to swing open, downward. He is then enabled to read the message on the slate, and the door is allowed to resume its former position, by releasing the pressure on the spring. The medium may then proceed to give the information acquired in any manner he desires.

I now come to consider the methods that are employed by the medium in order to gain a knowledge of the contents of *sealed* letters, and I cannot do better than to quote the following passage from *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, pp. 172-7:

" If you intend to become a professional medium the most agreeable and remunerative phase is that of answering sealed letters. A few hints as to the manner in which others have ' got to the front ' in that phase may be of use to you.

" Sit down and write an article describing the wonderful phenomena you have witnessed at your own séances for physical manifestations. In this communication or article for publication by one of the spiritual journals, you will describe yourself as having been very skeptical previous to your having visited your own séances, and witnessed the wonderful proofs of spirit return. After describing the wonders of your physical séances, you will mention the fact that you are a medium for answering sealed letters, and describe some wonderful tests you have received from yourself in that line!

Lay it on thick and be sure to get your name and street number incorporated into the article so that people will know where to address you. Now sign any name but your own, and mail it to one of the leading spiritual journals.

"If your article is well written, and you have described the phenomena as unusually wonderful, besides giving them to understand that you are now, through what is described in your manuscript, a firm believer in spiritualism, your article will surely be printed.

"As certainly as it is printed just so sure will you be overwhelmed with letters of inquiry from all over the United States. The letters will be asking information as to your fee for answering sealed letters and the method they should pursue in communicating with their spirit friends in that particular way. You will receive hundreds of letters to answer at one dollar each. You will receive letters sealed in all manner of curious ways in order to prevent your opening them. If you will exercise plenty of patience, no letter will come to your hands so securely sealed that you cannot readily open and replace it in its original condition so as to defy detection.

"The writer knows of a medium who, at one time, received a letter to answer that required him to earn his dollar before he had it in shape to return to the writer without danger of detection.

"This particular letter was enclosed in three opaque envelopes. The letter itself was folded to fit the smallest of the three envelopes and the edges glued together. It was now stitched with silk thread, red in the needle, and blue in the bobbin or shuttle. It was put into the first envelope, with two or three spots of glue on it, causing it to stick to the envelope and the medium to swear. Not being content to let this end their precautions, they now stitched through envelope and sheet, and, after putting mucilage all over the side on which the seams were, inserted it in the second envelope. This envelope was mucilaged and placed in the third envelope, which was sealed with furniture glue, besides being waxed with letter wax and stamped with some kind of die

that the medium could not duplicate without going to more expense than it would be worth.

"The medium succeeded in getting the letter out and back again. How did he manage it?

"He began by prying the wax off the outside envelope with a thin knife-blade. It came off in pieces from the size of a pea to pieces as large as a five-cent nickel. He took good care not to break the wax containing the impression of the die; the balance did not matter, for it could be melted again. Now he got up steam in the teakettle, and, after first dampening the seams, soon steamed off the outside envelope. When it came off it was put carefully to one side to dry. The second envelope was disposed of in the same manner. After examining the third envelope and finding he could *duplicate* it, he steamed and cut it from the letter. He now had a good hour's work to pick the silk thread from the letter. It was finally accomplished, and the letter read and copied. The letter was folded on the old creases, and taken to the sewing-machine and stitched with red and blue silk in the same needle-holes from which the thread had been taken. He now got a duplicate for the envelope he had destroyed, and, after gluing the sheet, it was inserted in the envelope. It was necessary to put the thread back into this envelope by hand, for the reason that it must be held between himself and the light in order to see where the holes were, in the letter inside. These could not have been seen with the envelope under the machine-needle. You can imitate machine work very nicely by hand. The last envelope was now folded over it, after giving it a liberal coat of glue, so that it would be impossible to do much investigating without destroying the evidences, if any were left, of the medium's having tampered with it. Now comes the fine work. The wax has left a stain on the envelope which will guide you in putting back the pieces of wax on which are the impressions of the die or seal. Give them a good coat of glue, stick them in place, being careful not to allow the glue to show beyond the edges of the wax. Allow the pieces to dry on before replacing the remainder of the wax. After they are fast, melt the re-

mainder of the wax in a vessel and pour it where it had been before, being careful to make it cover all the stains and marks made by it in the first instance. See to it that the wax you have melted does not show a joint where it joins the pieces that you glued on. This can be remedied by heating a knife-blade, and holding it close to the wax until the two edges melt together.

" This letter came from what is called a ' Bundyite ' spiritualist, *viz.*, one who believes that all mediums are frauds, and all phenomena fraudulent, until they have demonstrated it differently to their own satisfaction. His questions were satisfactorily answered and quite a complimentary letter was received by the medium. . . ."

CHAPTER XVI

MIND - READING PERFORMANCES

WHETHER the phenomena of thought-transference are real facts in nature, whether such phenomena exist in reality, is a question I cannot stop to consider now. The evidence in the case will be found in full in the *Proceedings* of the S. P. R., and I would refer the reader to those pages, leaving him to draw his own conclusions from a study of the experiments there recorded. I, for one, do not deny that thought-transference really exists, and that, quite apart from "muscle-reading," there is a faculty in man which enables him, at certain times, to communicate directly with the consciousness of another individual, without recourse to the methods normally or usually employed. We know nothing as yet, however, of the laws that govern this sort of thought-transference or telepathy, and cannot *command* the phenomena to appear at our beck and call, or summon them at will; and consequently, any one who does so at once stamps himself as an impostor, or possibly, merely as a self-deluded person. The only thing we know about telepathy is that — we know nothing about it! When, therefore, public performers give nightly exhibitions of "thought-reading," "clairvoyance," and so on, it may be taken for granted that these exhibitions are nothing more than clever conjuring performances, the only amazing part of which is that the public can be so gullible, and that the performers can display so much ingenuity in devising new methods of trickery, so that, no sooner is one device made public, than they are ready with another method, entirely different from the first, and serving to throw the investigator off the track, for the rea-

son that the method of operation is so different that any one knowing the method of trickery in the first ease would be quite unable to explain the means employed in the second instanee. In the present ehapter, therefore, I shall attempt to give a detailed exposition of the various methods that are employed in performing aets of this charaeter, considering only the fraudulent side of the question, for the reason that, in public performances, we may be sure that that is all that is ever witnessed in the name of thought-transferenee.

I have already mentioned in the chapter on sealed-letter reading, and shall, further, in the ehapter on fraudulent trance-phenomena, enumerate a number of methods by which a medium may eome into possession of a large amount of knowledge about his sitter, and I need not repeat any of the evidence here. Test séanees proper I shall not consider in this connection, therefore, or any of the methods that are employed, in obtaining information about prospective sitters. The present chapter is devoted to a eonsideration of the methods by whieh the thoughts of one individual are apparently transferred to another, but by fraudulent means, and generally on a publie stage. The methods of doing this are so numerous that it would be quite impossible to consider them all in the present volume at any length, and I must accordingly content myself with enumerating the prineipal methods in use, and explaining the devices employed in order to produee the desired result.

There ïs a speeies of mind-reading performanee, made popular some years ago by J. Randall Brown, Washington Irving Bishop, Stuart Cumberland, and a few others, whieh had great popularity for some time, and sueeeeded in mystifying many thousands of persons. Their aets were, in the main, very similar. A large blackboard was plaeed upon an easel, on the stage, and the performer, after securing a number of persons from the audience to assist him (these were very rarely eonfederates, it may be observed in passing), would have himself securely blindfolded by the members of the eommittee, and then step up to the blackboard, chalk

in hand. Grasping one of the committee men by the hand, he would now proceed to trace on the board a number which had been previously chosen by some member of the committee, but which was unknown to the mind-reader. A bank-note would now be handed to some other member of the committee, and he, grasping the hand of the mind-reader, would concentrate his mind on the number of the note. The performer would then proceed to trace on the board, very slowly, the number of this note, which the assistant would certify was correct. In the same manner the mind-reader would tell the date of a coin, the number of a selected card, etc., the only condition required being that the person holding the hand of the performer should concentrate his mind on the number which the mind-reader was to write upon the board. Each of the above-mentioned performers succeeded in opening a safe, the combination of which they did not know, they merely holding the hand of the person who did know the combination; and (I believe) each of these gentlemen performed the spectacular feat of driving a hansom cab across the city, when blindfolded, and having a sack over the head in addition, and finding a hidden article secreted in a hotel at the other end of the city. These feats were all most marvellous, apparently, and it is small wonder that their generation marvelled at the feats they performed.

Every item in their performance is explainable by muscle-reading, however, and nothing but muscle-reading was operative in any of their performances or acts. The person holding the performer's hand gave him the required information by means of slight, unconscious movements, which the performer interpreted, also more or less unconsciously. When the performer's hand would move in the right direction, the person holding his hand would have a tendency to push it, while, if the hand was moving in the wrong direction, the assistant would have a slight tendency to restrain the performer's hand, thereby showing him that he was moving in the wrong direction. These twitches or movements, slight as they were, were quite sufficient to guide the expert mind-reader in his task, and enable him to successfully indicate

the date of a coin, the number of a watch, or a bank-note, etc. A detailed exposition of the manner of this guidance will be found in H. J. Burlingame's *How to Read People's Minds*, pp. 28-30. The opening of the safe was effected in the same manner, the performer receiving delicate indications by means of slight unconscious muscular twitches, the hand being guided throughout its difficult journey by the hand of the person who knew the combination and which hand he was holding. Incredible as this statement may appear, it is, nevertheless, the actual truth, as may be verified by any one caring to examine the evidence for himself. Stuart Cumberland stated that this was so in his own case, in his book, *A Thought-Reader's Thoughts*. A full exposition of A. J. Brown's methods will be found in a little pamphlet entitled *The Art of Mind-Reading*, while W. I. Bishop's methods are explained on pp. 14-16 of Burlingame's *How to Read People's Minds*, before referred to, and in other publications.

The trick of driving through the crowded city in a cab requires, perhaps, a little closer consideration. The eyes were first of all bandaged carefully, and over the head was thrown a sack or bag of thick, dark material. In the act of adjusting the sack over the head, the mind-reader managed to tilt up on to his eyebrows the bandages on his eyes, enabling him to see beneath the wads of wool placed over each eye. The front of the sack is " doctored " by thinning the material in a manner that will render it almost transparent, yet which will not show that it has been tampered with from the outside. The performer manages to get this part of the bag before his eyes. By tilting his head backward, he can now see fairly well, under the bandages and through the sack, and it only requires the usual care to drive the cab safely through the city. The hand is determined, meanwhile, by the slight indications given by the person sitting next to the driver, who is, in this case, the mind-reader. In this manner they arrive at the house, and the finding of the lost article then becomes an easy task for the skilled muscle-reader.

Before turning to an examination of the methods em-

ployed by professional mind-readers of the present day, let us consider a few of the devices that are employed in order to convey information from the performer to his assistant upon the stage, or elsewhere. These methods are innumerable, and no doubt every performer has his own. I shall mention a few of those of most general utility.

A slate is examined and cleaned. Any person in the audience is now requested to write several rows of figures, one under the other, on this slate, and it is then placed, together with the chalk, on a table, face downward. The assistant then comes upon the stage (or into the room), and, picking up the piece of chalk, writes a row of figures on the blank side of the slate, which proves to be the correct total to the rows of figures written on the reverse side of the slate. The performer, meanwhile, has not said a word, and has not been near the assistant.

The secret lies in the fact that the performer watches the person writing down the rows of figures on the slate, and mentally adds as they are written. He stands with his hands behind his back and under his coat-tails, and holds in his hands a piece of chalk, one side of which is slightly flattened. On this chalk, the performer writes the correct total of the rows of figures, and places *this* piece of chalk on the slate instead of the other, the substitution being made on the way to the table. It will readily be seen that, as soon as the assistant picks up the piece of chalk to write the answer on the slate, he comes into possession of the correct knowledge of the total of the rows of figures on the other side of the slate.

A very similar device is sometimes used by professional mind-readers to very good effect, generally as an "impromptu" test of the performer's powers. A message is written on a piece of paper by some one, who is at liberty to fold up this paper, and place it in his pocket, after having first shown it to the performer. The performer's assistant, meanwhile, is in some distant part of the city, and in ignorance of the test that is in progress. A note is written to her, requesting that she at once inform them of the contents

of the note in the gentleman's pocket. The gentleman may carry this note to the assistant himself, if he so desires, or a messenger may be sent. There is no trick wording of the letter, which may be written by the gentleman himself, if he desires to do so. A fountain-pen is sent with the message, in case the assistant has no writing materials. As soon as this note is received, the assistant writes out the correct contents of the letter in the gentleman's pocket.

The trick consists in the fact that the performer copies out the letter which the gentleman has written on a very fine piece of tissue-paper, and, after crumpling this up into a ball, thrusts it into the cap of the fountain-pen, which, it will be remembered, was sent along with the note. The assistant abstracts this piece of paper, reads it, and is at once informed of the contents of the letter in the gentleman's pocket. All she has to do is to copy this on to another piece of paper.

If the performance is the regulation public exhibition, in which the assistant remains on the stage, while the performer goes down among the audience, the chief object, of course, is for the performer to be able to communicate with the assistant instantly, effectually, and in such a manner that the audience will not suspect that any such communication is being established. The older methods of doing this were in the form of spoken "codes," the manner of putting the question to the assistant at once conveying to him or her the information required. Elaborate codes were devised and memorized by the performer and his assistant, with this object in view. I cannot stop to give any of these codes here, which may be very easily imagined. The form of the question would indicate the article touched by the performer. Such simple questions as: "What article is this?" "What is this?" "What may this be?" "What is here?" "What have I here?" "Can you see this?" "Do you know what this is?" "Look at this." "Now, what is this?" "Tell me this." "I want to know this." "Pray what is this?" "You know what this is?" "Quick. This article." "Name this article?" "Say, what is this?" "This arti-

cle? " indicating the article to the assistant on the platform without further delay. The group of questions quoted above are from Heller's " code," used by him for a number of years.[1]

Of late years, however, this code method has been almost entirely given up, and the assistant on the stage gives the required information, either without a word being spoken at all, or by the *same* question being asked each time. Obviously, therefore, no code could be employed in such cases, and the performer is forced into devising other methods by which he can convey the required information to his assistant upon the stage. These methods are numerous.

In some cases, the performer is connected with the stage by means of an electric current, a third assistant frequently being employed in these cases, he acting as intermediary between the performer and the assistant *on* the stage. The performer passes amongst the audience, and is shown numbers on bills, dates on coins, etc., which the assistant on the stage immediately names correctly.

The secret lies in the fact that the performer has, passed up his legs and inside the trousers, copper wires, the ends of which connect with metal plates on the soles of his shoes, and so arranged that the circuit may be completed by pressing together two wires, separated by a spring, which is directly under the performer's waistcoat. He stands on the metal rim of the carpet which runs down the aisle, and to the other ends of which are attached wires, leading either to the assistant directly, or to some third person who conveys the message to the assistant upon the stage by means of signals. When the performer sees the date on the coin, the number of the bank-note, etc., all he has to do is to touch the two wires together a certain number of times, and the signal is interpreted at the other end of the line. A code is always employed to shorten and quicken the process.

[1] See *Magic, Stage Illusions,* pp. 184-201; *More Magic,* by Professor Hoffmann, pp. 236-60; *Magic and Its Professors,* pp. 67-70; *Mahatma,* Vol. IV., No. 5, etc., for a further consideration of Heller's performances, and the methods of conveying information to the assistant by various code signals.

If the signals are carried to another assistant behind the scenes, that person communicates the results of the signals to the assistant upon the stage by means of hand signals, by a speaking-tube, by a hidden telephone (the receiver being hidden in the high back of the chair, close to the assistant's ears), by means of a thread, this either passing directly into the assistant's hand, or connected with a tapping instrument hidden in her hair, by means of the assistant's foot (the sole of the shoe being cut out entirely, and this opening fitting over a hole in the stage, the assistant thus being enabled to touch the sole of the foot), or other methods.

In some of these tests, especially in those cases in which a blackboard is used, the assistant may make use of another device. She is seated on the stage, slightly to one side, and with her back toward the board. She can tell almost instantly the totals of rows of figures written on the board; answer questions written thereon, etc.

The secret lies in the fact that the lady has hidden, either in her glove, or fastened to an inner fold of her fan, a small mirror, which is capable of reflecting the back portion of the stage when held up to the forehead, as if in thought. The bandage is so arranged that the assistant can see beneath it, and consequently the whole of the stage, when reflected in the mirror. Card-sharpers make use of a variation of this trick in order to swindle their opponents. They have a small mirror concealed either in a ring, or the bowl of a pipe, or make use of a small mirror attached to the under side of the table. A detailed description of all these and many other such methods will be found detailed in J. N. Maskelyne's book, *Sharps and Flats.*

Some years ago, a great sensation was made by the production of a mind-reading "act," which had every appearance of being genuine. The effect of the performance is this. The performer passes amongst the audience, and has a number of suggestions whispered into his ear by different individuals. These suggestions are acts which the audience wish the assistant upon the stage to do, such as "Tear a programme in halves," "Take a handkerchief out of a lady's

pocket," "Pull a certain gentleman's hair," "Turn up a certain gentleman's trousers," etc.

After a number of suggestions of this character have been whispered into the performer's ear, he turns toward the stage, and, without a word being spoken, the assistant comes down from the stage and performs every act suggested to the performer, and in the order desired. The performer and his assistant do not approach one another throughout the whole "act," and until she has performed everything correctly.

This feat is accomplished in the following way. The performer and his assistant have first learned by heart a number of performances of the kind likely to be requested by an audience, in a preärranged order. When this is once done, it is obvious that all the performer has to do is to induce his sitters to choose these acts, one after another, in the order learned previously, and the assistant can execute each in turn without further assistance from the performer. This may seem an impossible task to one not accustomed to the methods employed by conjurers, in "forcing" choices of this kind upon an audience. It is, however, a comparatively easy task to an expert. He would go about it something after this manner. Going up to some gentleman in the audience, he would say, "What shall the lady do for you, sir? Shall she pull your hair, turn up your trousers at the bottom, or tie a tie in your handkerchief?" — these being the first three items on the list, we will say. "Suppose she pull your hair," says the performer, as he moves away toward the next victim. Unless the person is particularly unsuggestible, he will acquiesce gracefully, and even feel he had a free hand in choosing the act to be performed! This may sound incredible, when placed in print in this cold-blooded manner, but when properly presented, the effect is extraordinarily deceptive. If, however, the first person is particularly strong-willed, and refuses to accept this suggestion, the performer lets him choose any of the other acts on the list, merely taking mental notes of those persons who choose the various acts, in their proper order. By judicious "forcing,"

then, the performer manages to get the entire list chosen by members of his audience, he remembering *who* wished each act to be performed.

All this time the band has been playing, but now it ceases, and the assistant on the stage turns, faces the audience, and steps down among them. The assistant in this act is supposed to be hypnotized, and the performer accordingly continues to make mysterious "passes" over her, at some distance. These passes are to indicate the person who wished the various movements on the part of the assistant. When the assistant has advanced up the aisle of the theatre to the row wherein sits the first victim, the performer gives the signal by slightly lowering his hands. The assistant then knows she is on the right row, and is at the same instant told whether to turn to the right or the left by the performer, who closes the fingers of the hand on the side to which the assistant is to turn, the others remaining open. The assistant then passes along the row of seats until she is in front of the right person, when the performer gives another signal — drops one arm slightly, or opens the fingers of the closed hand. The assistant then knows she is to perform the first act in the list, and upon *this person, i. e.*, the one in front of her. In a similar manner the entire list is gone through, the performer leading his assistant to each person in turn and she performing the acts in the prearranged order. The "act" is completed without a word being spoken.

This trick is very similar, in principle, to the performance of "The Svengalis," whose mind-reading performance lately created quite a sensation, and whose act is worked on very similar principles to that just given. The performer steps down among the audience, while his assistant remains upon the stage, with her back to the performer and the audience. Names of great personages are whispered into the professor's ear, and the assistant upon the stage at once repeats the name aloud. A certain popular air from one of the operas is then called for, or rather the name is whispered into the ear of the performer, and the assistant, who sits in

front of an open piano, at once plays the air or selection called for. The name of any great composer, author, statesman, etc., is likewise at once given by the assistant upon the stage, and without leaving it for an instant or once facing the audience or the " professor."

At first sight, it would appear that this performance must be explained upon different lines from the last test, as, in that case, the performer had the opportunity to direct the assistant to the person in the audience, while here, she never once leaves the stage, and, moreover, no prearranged code is possible, the audience having free choice as to what they will select. As a matter of fact, however, the main outlines of the performances are the same, the differences being in detail.

The key to the performance lies partly in the fact that there is a confederate hidden behind a screen, so situated that he can see the actions of the performer, in the audience, and *also* see the assistant upon the stage, or rather, so that she can see him; partly in the fact that the signals are given by the performer in a series of natural movements, and interpreted by the assistant behind the screen. The assistant upon the stage sees these movements, and knows what is going on in the audience. The information is communicated to the assistant behind the screen, to be again interpreted, by him, for the benefit of the young lady upon the stage. The series of touches or movements is quite natural and unlikely to be detected by the most shrewd observer.

Here is an illustration of how the figure system can be worked. The famous personages, popular songs, and operas are on numbered lists. Svengali, in the aisle, with his code of signals, has all these numbers committed to memory. When the spectator whispers, " Dickens," Svengali knows it is (say) No. 4, and he signals accordingly. But how?

By touching his head, chin, and breast or that particular part of his body designed in the signal code of the Svengali Company. . . . Say the human head is used for this purpose. Imagine the top of the head, right-hand side, as No. 1, the right ear as No. 2, the jaw as No. 3, and the neck as the

cipher, the forehead No. 4, the nose No. 5, the chin No. 6, the top of the head on the left side as No. 7, the left ear No. 8, and the left side of the jaw No. 9. Thus you have the code system by which operators can communicate volumes by using a codified list of numbered words or sentences. If you label the Lord's Prayer No. 4, and the Declaration of Independence No. 5, you may instantly telegraph the mighty literature through wireless space, — enough literature to save all Europe from anarchy, — by two natural movements of the hands. You can label your eyes, your movements, or even your glances, making them take the places of the nine omnipotent numbers. Again: Glance upward to the right for No. 1, straight upward for No. 2, and upward to the left for No. 3; repeating, glance horizontally for Nos. 4, 5, and 6. Repeating the same again by glancing downward for 7, 8, and 9, and stroking the chin for the cipher. With your back to the audience, you can telegraph in a similar way, using your arm and elbow to make the necessary signals. Let the right arm, hanging down, represent No. 1, the elbow projecting from the side, No. 2, the elbow raised, No. 3. Repeat with the left arm for Nos. 4, 5, and 6; with either hand placed naturally behind you on the small of the back, above the belt, and over your shoulder for Nos. 7, 8, and 9, and on the back of your head for the cipher.

Another method of signalling information to the assistant upon the stage, is by means of certain movements of the fingers, they fingering the watch-chain, touching the buttons of the coat and waistcoat, etc., in a series of natural movements. The assistant is, in this case, blindfolded, and her head enveloped in a sack; but she is enabled to see all that happens, nevertheless, by making use of the methods and devices explained on p. 294. The sack is "doctored" by placing pieces of crape before the eyes, and the assistant is so placed that she can see the performer either directly, or by means of a small mirror, mentioned above. The performer and his assistant have learned a code of signals, and it is an easy matter to interpret them so soon as she can obtain a view of the performer and his movements.

In order to make clear this method of signalling, I give a tentative description of the methods that might be employed in communicating numbers and letters, this serving as a clue to the many methods that are worked in this manner, and by some more or less similar means.

The signals would be about as follows. I begin with those for the left hand.

Code A. The performer's right hand is playing with his watch-chain. The left hand and arm are hanging down by the side: "I am giving numbers." Left hand akimbo at hip; "I am spelling something." Left hand at lapel of coat, near top button: "I am giving abbreviations." If left hand moves slightly, say three inches or so, while in any of these positions: "I am giving a color by its number." Shifting your weight from one foot to the other, means: "I am starting," or "I am through."

This last sign is used in the following way: if the performer only kept his right hand at the watch-chain when necessary, it might arouse suspicion, therefore the medium must receive some signal when the performer commences signalling. That is done by standing with the legs a few inches apart, and shifting the weight of the body from one leg to the other, which gives a kind of swaying motion to the body scarcely noticeable to the uninitiated, but enough for the medium. When through giving signs, instead of always moving the hand from the chain, suddenly, which would also be suspicious, keep your hand there, but shift your weight back to the other foot, meaning, "All through;" then, even if you keep up the playing with the chain, the medium knows that there is no further meaning to it.

Code B. Next we come to the signs of the right hand. I shall first explain the ten figures: it is to be presumed that the performer wears a dress coat with a low-cut vest and carries his watch in his lower left-hand vest pocket, with the staple in the second or middle buttonhole. It is advisable to have the chain several inches longer than the usual length. The chain itself has nothing to do with the signalling; it is the right hand alone that must be watched by the medium,

and the portion of the vest on which the finger-tips rest, indicates what number is meant.

For figure 1, pick up the chain at its middle, and place finger-tips against the bottom of vest, directly in a perpendicular line from the watch-pocket.

No. 2. Finger-tips at watch-pocket.

No. 3. Above watch-pocket near upper pocket. One, two, and three are on the left side of the vest.

No. 4. At bottom of vest, where the two parts of vest meet.

No. 5. At or near the staple.

Four, five, and six are in the centre of vest; for "cipher" the sign is made by twisting the chain around the right thumb, without the help of the fingers. The chain should generally be held by its centre, when it will be easy to reach the various portions of the vest. For one, four, and seven, go as low down as the chain will permit, for three, six, and nine, as high as you can.

We now come to a description of the alphabet. I omit K and Q at first. A is made just as figure one, B as two, C as three, D as four, E as five, F as six, G as seven, H as eight, and I as nine. Then we begin over again: J is one, L is two, M is three, N is four, O is five, P is six, R is seven, S is eight, T is nine, but for these letters J to T shake the chain a little, while, in the former cases, A to I, the hand is held almost quiet. Twirling the chain slightly will not give a decided motion; shaking the chain gives a decided up and down motion to the hand, and is distinctly visible even at fifty or sixty feet distant. Care must be taken that the finger-tips remain near the places one, two, etc., and not midway between any two numbers. Practise before a mirror, so as not to get the habit of looking at the hand, and see that the movements look careless, and not stiff, jerky, or violent.

The letters U and W are given the same as the cipher, by twisting the chain around the thumb, describing a circle with the hand; but in U, the circle is made at 4, 1, 2, and 5, that is, on the lower left side of the vest; in W it is made at 5, 2, 6, or upper left of vest. The remaining letters,

K and Q, are given by twisting the chain around the first or index finger; this will make the circles go in the opposite direction.

The remaining letters are given by a kind of whip movement. Grip the chain tightly between the first and second fingers and thumb, and make a stroke up and down, as if the chain were a whip. This will give to the hand a kind of violent up and down movement. If made in the centre of the vest, and only once, it is a Y; if twice in quick succession it means Z. If at watch-pocket twice, 1-2, 1-2, it means X.

This alphabet should be thoroughly learned and diligently practised, using small words to start. To show where one word ends and the next one begins, drop the chain from the right hand, remove the hand three or four inches, and then pick it up again, at X, for the next word. Do not forget to shift your weight at the beginning and end of the sentence. If figures are mixed in with words, for example, "house with three windows," drop your left hand at the end of "house with," to the side, and make the three, then raise it again to the hip, and spell the next word.

I next give a very clever test in which the assistant stands in front of a blackboard, with chalk in her hands, and writes upon the board whatever number, date, card, etc., is whispered into the performer's ear, when he is amongst the audience, not a word being spoken throughout this test, and it is obvious that there is no communication of any sort between performer and assistant. The performer moves about freely amongst the audience, the only condition required being that absolute silence be maintained.

In this case, there exists a secret code very similar to that last explained, the numbers, letters, etc., being given or communicated in a very similar manner. The whole question is that of communicating the information, and this is done in a very ingenious manner. The assistant upon the stage *breathes deeply* and *regularly*, so that the performer can see the movement of her shoulders from where he stands, care being taken, however, not to overdo this part of the

performance, and render the movement noticeable to any person in the audience. The performer starts his assistant by making some slight noise or movement, and from that instant the silent counting begins. It is for this reason that "absolute silence" is requested, so as to render the signals plainly distinguishable by the assistant upon the stage. After she has counted up to a certain number, the number required (*i e.*, after she has taken that number of breaths), the performer interrupts her breathing, and the assistant knows the number to place upon the board. The counting then begins again, from the moment the sound of the chalk ceases to mark the blackboard — the performer again interrupting the breathing at the next number or letter, as the case may be, by again making a slight sound or movement. This process is continued until the whole message is communicated, the assistant writing down each word or figure in turn, no word being spoken throughout the entire performance. If the lady upon the stage is so placed that she can see the performer, a slight movement on his part, at the required number, is all that is required. No noise will then be necessary, this being an improvement in some respects, though detracting from the general effect of the trick, inasmuch as the assistant can see the performer.

There is a method of performing this act which is far superior to that just described. The general method is the same, but, instead of the breathing being necessary, the performer and his assistant have substituted a method of *counting mentally* and *together*. It is a known fact that the beats for common time are always the same in music; therefore, with little practice, it is easy for two persons, starting on a given signal, to count at the same time and rate, and, when another signal is given, to stop, and of course they will both have arrived at the same number. The performer and his assistant count together, mentally, until they are sure that they both count in exactly the same time, when the hardest portion of this method will have been overcome. The signals of when to stop and when to commence have now to be learned, and these are, in this instance, very in-

genious. Suppose the date of a coin is to be transmitted. It is generally understood that most coins begin with the figure 1, and that much may be taken for granted. The performer stands up at the blackboard, his assistant being on the opposite side of the stage, and awaits her replies. She begins, "The first figure I see is a 1." From the instant she has ceased speaking, both she and the performer begin counting together. Suppose the next number is an 8. The performer waits until he (and consequently his assistant) has mentally counted eight breaths, *before* he marks upon the board, when he writes the figure 1, as directed. The assistant now knows that the next number is eight and so states. Before marking down the 8, however, the performer waits until they have both counted up to the next number on the coin, say 9. After mentally counting nine, then, the performer writes down the 8, previously given, and the assistant, hearing the sound of the chalk, knows the number next in order, and so on indefinitely. Both performer and his assistant keep just "one ahead" throughout; the sound of the chalk on the blackboard being the signal for when to stop and when to commence. As the performer and his assistant both count quite rapidly, there is scarcely any noticeable wait between the time the number is called out by the assistant and the writing of that number on the board. The performer may fill up the intervening time, in the case of the longer intervals, by pretending to look at the coin and ascertain whether the number given by his assistant is correct. In other cases a more or less elaborate circular sweep of the arm will suffice. A sharp tap on the board, or the drawing of a line under the figures, will tell the assistant that the date is now fully given and the counting may cease.

In case the number of a bank-note, *e. g.*, is to be given, instead of the date on a coin, the same plan is adopted throughout, except, in this case, the assistant cannot take for granted the fact that the first number is 1. The signal to start is therefore given *by the assistant*, who raises her hand to her head, as if in thought, and from that moment, both performer and assistant commence counting together.

When the required number has been reached, the performer gives a sigh, or takes a quick step, or gives some other signal to indicate that the first number has been reached. The assistant accordingly announces it, and the performer waits the proper time, before marking it on the board, as in the other test, this giving to the assistant the *second* number, and so on throughout, until the signal to " stop " is given. Card tests are frequently given by stacking the deck. Such tests as the knight's tour of the chess board, etc., are pure feats of memory, and need no code for their performance, the moves all having been learned by heart long before, and given in the regular order.

The mind-reading performance of the Baldwins has frequently been exposed. A very good account of their entertainment is given in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XI., pp. 225-8, and the outlines of their method explained. A slightly more detailed explanation of the actual *modus operandi* I give herewith.

During the early part of the performance, a number of slips of paper are distributed among the audience, with the request that they write on them questions such as " Who stole my watch? " They are then asked to fold them up and place them in their pockets, and keep their minds on the contents. They are also requested to sign their full name on the slips. During the latter part of the performance, Mrs. Baldwin is brought upon the stage, in a supposed " hypnotic " state. She starts by saying: " I have an impression; it comes from the centre of the house; it is from James Brown; he wishes to know who stole his pocketbook." Mr. Baldwin now asks for the slip, and Mrs. Baldwin either describes, or gives the initials of the person who stole the pocketbook, probably telling when it was stolen, and the amount of money it contained. In this manner she answers three or four questions, when she appears to be " chilled." A piece of cloth is thrown over her, and she answers the rest of the questions, and probably describes some recent murder.

The secret of this feat is as follows:

Amongst the audience are placed four or five confederates

who take slips of paper, but instead of writing questions, they take copies of the questions that are written by those around them, giving the row and the number of the seat; and, if they cannot make out the name, they give a description of the writer's dress. These slips are passed to the attendants when they collect the pencils and the small tablets from which the slips are torn. They are taken to Mrs. Baldwin, and a list is made of them with such answers as they see fit. When possible, information of lost friends is obtained. Additional information is obtained by taking into confidence the manager or treasurer of the house. For instance, if some person, when buying a ticket, tells the treasurer that he has lost some article, and that he is going to ask Baldwin about it, the treasurer makes a note of this, and also the seat the person buys. In her act, Mrs. Baldwin uses this information. Marked change is frequently given to persons buying seats, *e. g.*, a dollar bill, the number of which is known to the ticket agent, or a half-dollar, of which he knows the year, etc. A note is made of the number of the ticket to the purchaser of which this marked change is given, and, later on in the performance, a gentleman sitting in " C, 3," is astonished to find that the medium has informed him correctly when she stated that he had in his pocket a dollar bill, the number of which was C7768493, and another gentleman is equally surprised to be informed that he has in his pocket a half-dollar, of the date of 1862! These are given as " spontaneous tests," and so appear all the more remarkable.

Before Mrs. Baldwin goes on to the stage she conceals in her dress the list of questions; but she commits four or five of them to memory, which she gives first. When these are exhausted, she has the cloth thrown over her, which gives her an opportunity to consult the list. For each performance, one or two questions are worked up by the confederates, for the star test of the evening. These usually relate to some great local sensation, such as a murder, or a railroad accident. By this method it is obvious that a tremendous amount of sensation can be produced, limited only by the skill of

the performers. Still further information can be obtained by having a lady and gentleman confederate make a systematic canvass of the towns where the performer intends playing (*v.* pp. 312-18). It will hardly be necessary for me to describe a performance of the Baldwins in any further detail, as the actual working out of the tricks can be easily imagined.

I shall conclude this chapter by briefly mentioning the performance of "The Fays," which has lately been causing quite a sensation. Their performance is very similar to that of the Baldwins, the pads being passed round in the same manner, and the information being obtained in the same manner, to a large extent, also. In their performance, however, recourse is made to the prepared pads mentioned on p. 277, a duplicate of the written question being taken on an under sheet in the pad. Some persons receive answers to questions written by themselves upon an envelope, programme, etc., which never leaves their possession, and, when this is the case, the information has usually been obtained through the ushers, or assistants, or through the confederates, as in the last case. The Fays also employ a large number of confederates, and very many of the most astonishing "tests" are doubtless received and claimed by them. The majority of the questions that are answered, however, are those which were written on the pads that were handed round to the audience by the assistants, and the pads afterward collected by them. The part of the house from which each question comes may be indicated by having the paper marked, or by having the pads slightly different in color, etc. All these slips of paper are collected, and opened and read in the interval that elapses between Parts 1 and 2 of their performance. When Miss Fay comes on to the stage, therefore, in Part 2, she has in her possession duplicates of all the questions that were written on the pads, as well as much miscellaneous information about various sitters, scattered in different parts of the house, as well as the *sure* tests afforded by the confederates, who are instructed to acknowledge anything said to them by the medium as true. When the thick

cloth is thrown over her head, therefore, she gets out a miniature pocket-lamp, and, by its aid, proceeds to read and answer all the papers she has in her possession. It has been stated (by Lambourne, a former assistant to the Fays) that the messages were telephoned to Miss Fay from beneath the stage. This may have been employed in some cases, but the former method is doubtless the one usually employed.

I cannot stop to consider these public performances at greater length now. The methods of obtaining information are so numerous, and the codes employed so ingenious, that it is practically impossible for the average person to detect the fraud that is invariably practised, in exhibitions such as these.

CHAPTER XVII

TRANCE, "TEST SÉANCES," ETC.

THE most mysterious factor in these "test séances," in which the medium either passes into trance, or receives clairvoyant "impressions" in a more or less normal condition, is the fact that the medium displays a knowledge of the sitter and his affairs which could not have been learned by any normal means (apparently), and which serve as the most convincing evidence of the presence of the departed, since a proof of identity is here established, which is missing in all the other phenomena (*v.* pp. 333-4). The medium states certain facts about the sitter — his past life, etc. — and displays a general knowledge of his family and personal life which must have been obtained either by a direct knowledge of the facts, or in some supernormal way. Thus, at least, thinks that sitter. Names of relatives long dead are given, together with their personal description; statements of the disease from which they died; personal characteristics, etc., — it is all very convincing. So much so, indeed, that the average sitter fails to distinguish the real evidence, and goes away with his mind in a hopeless muddle, in which real knowledge, general advice, warnings as to the future, and a hundred other things are indescribably mixed! For our present purposes, however, we shall discard such material as might have been obtained by "fishing," remarks let drop by the sitter, etc., and confine ourselves to a consideration of the manner in which the real evidence is obtained, that which is really good, "test evidence," and see whence the medium derived this knowledge.

The obvious way to obtain knowledge about any person is to go and get it! and the mediums have always proceeded on that plan. Every avenue to knowledge, every way by which the medium could obtain information about sitters, has been turned to account. I quote the following passage from Truesdell's *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, pp. 310-12, as giving a very good idea of the methods usually employed by mediums of this class, in acquiring their information.

" The most feasible way of introducing yourself to a new town is by means of a systematic canvass of the same, with the ostensible purpose of disposing of some manner of merchandise, such as books, patent medicines, and household utensils. Do not disclose to any one your real business, or your ultimate design. Keep your eyes and ears open, and learn all you possibly can, both of the living and the dead, among prominent spiritualists. Provide yourself with a blank book suitable for the pocket, which contains an index. Under the proper letter, record every name and date which you imagine may be of future service. From these notes, you will be able to prepare, at your leisure, such a history as will materially assist you afterward. By the exercise of a little shrewdness, you can soon learn, at the post-office and principal news-rooms of the town, who are the greatest readers of spiritual papers, while the local cemetery will furnish you with desirable information concerning their friends who have passed into spirit life. With the names and dates thus secured, you will be able, in most instances, to make your brief histories more complete by referring to the obituary notices so plentifully to be found in the files of the local newspapers.

" This preliminary work is called ' planting a town.' The larger the area planted, and the more thorough the work, the more abundant the harvest. When you have carefully canvassed one town, according to these directions, proceed to another, and there repeat your labors. Never think of entering upon the harvest until you have planted at least six towns, though double the number would be still better. If,

by any means, you can sustain yourself for a period sufficient to thoroughly plant from twelve to twenty large towns, a good business is virtually ensured to you for life."

"There is strength in unity!" So thought the mediums, too. While, in the early days, each medium doubtless had to gather his own information, by his own efforts, in the manner above described, it gradually dawned upon the mediums throughout the country that if they were to "combine their forces," so to speak, *i. e.*, if they were to all contribute to some general headquarters whatever information they had been enabled to gather in their travels through the country, and if each medium covered different territory, they would soon have a tremendous fund of information about spiritualists and persons in the habit of frequenting séances, which any medium travelling through that section of the country could use thenceforward. The idea was a brilliant one, and accordingly a "brotherhood" of mediums was formed, each member of the organization binding himself to turn into the "public fund" whatever information he obtained concerning sitters, their dead friends and relatives, etc. As numbers of mediums were constantly travelling over all parts of the country, it will readily be seen that, in the course of a few years, a great mass of information was accumulated, which was arranged, printed, and circulated among the mediums who had joined the Brotherhood. So closely was this secret guarded from the public, however, that it was in operation many years before any inkling was had of such a publication being in existence. It was called the "Blue Book," and its present size and thoroughness may be imagined when I state that the *Blue Book* contains about seven thousand names devoted to Boston alone! Other cities are in proportion.[1] Supplemental lists, giving the latest information, are issued from time to time. Those who are exceptionally credulous are marked "dead easy!" I herewith quote a typical page from one of these *Blue Books*, relating to Cincinnati, Ohio. (The names are altered, in order

[1] *Mysteries of the Séance*, p. 4.

to prevent the identity of the person mentioned being discovered.)

FOR CINCINNATI, OHIO

G. A. Anson, Merchant

Spt. Dau. Elsie, died '76, age 14 mos., diphtheria, blonde, blue eyes.

Spt. Moth. Eleanor Anson, died '67, consumption, age 56, dark.

Spt. Fath. Nathan E. Anson, died '71, pneumonia, age 64, light.

Spt. Friend, Andy Nugent, schoolmates at Oberlin, O.

S. O. Atwood, Shoe Dealer

Spt. Son, Albert E., '74, lung fever, 19 years, blonde, only child. His parents keep his books and clothing. He is always described as a student with book in hand. Good mark for private sittings.

R. B. Barker, Rich

Spt. Dau. Alice E., age 19, pneumonia, '79, upper front teeth gold-filled. Extraordinarily long hair. Quite an artist, and one of her landscapes hangs in the parlor in gilt and plush frame. Spirit painting of her in the sitting-room, that is kept curtained. She is an artist in spirit world. Supposed to have a son in spirit that had no earth life, named Egbert O.

Spt. Son, Egbert O., never had earth existence; an inventor in spirit life and supposed to work through Thos. Edison. Is especially interested in electrical work.

Spt. Fath. Robert B., died '69, paralysis. Manufacturer of machinery, two fingers off left hand.

Spt. Mother, Sarah, died when he was a child.

Spt. Broth. James and Samuel.

Spt. Aunt, Lucy Wilkinson, Mary Wilkinson, and Eliza Shandrow.

Remarks. — A good mark for private séances at his home, and will pay well. Dead gone on physical manifestations and materialization. Will get up lots of séances. Agree with everything he says and you are all right.

A. T. Baton

Spt. Son, Albert F., drowned under suspension bridge, May, '87. Sends message of greeting to Aunt Mary and Cousin Harry.

Spt. Father, A. O. Baton, died '84, railroad accident in Illinois. Is looking for private papers supposed to have been left by him. Sends love to his wife Kate in Covington.

Now it can very readily be seen that, with such a fund of information at his back, the medium can go into any town fully armed with a wonderful lot of knowledge about prospective sitters. It does not matter in the least whether he has been there before or not; or whether he has ever seen the sitter before, either. If he can only find out the *identity* of his sitter, the rest is "plain sailing." He procures this information in a variety of ways. In many cases, the sitter gives his name himself, feeling that the medium and he are perfect strangers, and consequently there can be no harm in telling his name, as it would furnish the medium with no more information about himself than the name itself would supply. Fatal error! As soon as the medium becomes aware of the sitter's identity, he excuses himself for a few moments (to get slates, or what not), and consults his *Blue Book*, finding out what it has to say about this particular person. Armed with this information, he is prepared to give his sitter a most convincing "test séance."

But suppose the sitter does not give his name to the medium? There are many ways of finding this out that will suggest themselves. The sitter's name may be marked inside his hat; or letters may be in the pockets of his overcoat, — left in the hall, — which the medium is careful to examine. Or the information may be let drop in the conversation. But there are safer ways than all these of finding out the

sitter's identity, and that is to make sure of it before the séance! The medium does this by disguising himself and attending a number of séances given by some local medium, in the capacity of onlooker, and notices carefully the sitters present. After the séance, he goes up to the medium who has "provided the phenomena for that occasion," and requests that the identity of the various sitters be made known to him. If both mediums are in the Brotherhood, this is aways done, and the medium goes away possessed of a large fund of information about spiritualists in that section, since the resident medium probably possesses a very good knowledge of all the prominent believers in the locality. After attending several of these séances, the medium is ready to commence operations on his own account; he doffs his disguise, and boldly advertises himself as "the world famous so-and-so, just arrived in this part of the country, and for a short time only will give a series of test séances," etc. As the medium is now "primed" for his sitters, they will receive the most astonishing tests, and (that most convincing of all tests, to the average person) will have their name told them by the medium *without their having mentioned it or spoken a word,* — they never having seen the medium before! Possibly not, but that does not argue that the medium has never seen *them* before.

Mediums will resort to any sort of trickery or device to obtain the desired information about their sitters, present or prospective. Truesdell, *e. g.*, in his *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, pp. 317-8, says:

"Never neglect an opportunity to gain information which will aid you in your professional venture. When you are invited out, as you are sure to be, to dine, always seek to draw your host or hostess into a discussion in the course of which you will be obliged to call for the family Bible, in order to prove some statement made, and, while looking for the required passage, carefully note the records of birth and death which are therein preserved. This will give you a *point*, and such 'points' compose the chief stock in trade of every true medium."

I am glad to be through with this part of my subject, which grows revolting. The methods employed by fraudulent mediums in obtaining their information about sitters, arouse our disgust, at times, even though they may arouse a sort of admiration at others — admiration for the ingenuity of the means and methods devised, and amazement at the effrontery which enables the medium to come before the whole American public with the statement that this transparent trickery constitutes real evidence of spirit return! Nevertheless, these pseudo-mental manifestations are, after all, by far the most convincing and the most sane phenomena that spiritism presents. It has always been a great difficulty for many of us to see wherein the evidence for a future life came, in the purely *physical* manifestations, ever granting that they were genuine. But, as they are, in the vast majority of cases, such transparent frauds, it is really hard to see wherein the connection between these phenomena and spiritualism comes in. Even were the movements of objects, etc., genuine phenomena, it would point, merely, it seems to me, to some new force operative in the physical world, and have nothing whatever to do with "spirits." However, it is impossible to foresee how the public mind will be affected by phenomena of this character — far less the individual in that public!

PART II
THE GENUINE

CHAPTER XVIII

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

We now turn to a consideration of certain phenomena which have the appearance of being genuine in character, and not the results of conscious and voluntary fraud. Before actually doing so, however, some few remarks of a more or less general nature are necessary if we are to understand the problem aright. I must begin by saying that the scientific world, of late years, has been split into two factions over the question of the validity of the study of certain phenomena, which, for want of a better name, have been termed "psychic." And, just here, I wish to remark that many if not all of the misunderstandings would have disappeared if the question were rightly considered, as a question of *facts*, and not as a question of *interpretation* of facts. Most scientific men refuse to investigate psychic phenomena for the reason that they object to the interpretation of those phenomena which the spiritist puts upon them, and do not seem to realize that the facts, as such, exist, whatever interpretation we choose to put upon them; that the question of whether a table is raised off the floor without visible support, *e. g.*, is one that can be settled by purely scientific means, and is quite independent of any question of "spiritual agencies," or any explanatory hypothesis whatever. The *fact* is one that can be settled by direct experiment; the object is to see whether the phenomenon exists in reality or not. It is largely owing to the erroneous idea that the prevailing interpretation of the phenomena must be accepted if the facts themselves are, and that the two are inseparable, that scien-

tific men have held aloof from the question until late years, and even now the *savants* are approaching the subject in fear and trembling!

A tremendous amount of prejudice has existed in this field, and against the investigation of the phenomena from the very commencement of its study. Huxley,[1] Tyndall,[2] Faraday,[3] Haeckel,[4] all showed themselves highly prejudiced when it came to this subject; and, worse still, totally ignorant of the evidence that had been accumulated by others. The type of mind still exists, and may be found in the writings of many scientists to-day. Dr. E. Hart is an example of the newer school, his *Hypnotism, Mesmerism, and the New Witchcraft* being a most self-contradictory and absurd book from start to finish. Professor Sidgwick of Cambridge, England, accused him of being "totally ignorant of the subject he attacked," which was a fact. Snyder (*v. New Conceptions in Science*) and other writers occupy the same position. It is not the province of this book to attack any writer, or any school, but merely to point out the fact that the majority of critics of psychic phenomena, who have pronounced against their investigation, were not fitted to pronounce judgment upon this branch of science, owing to their lack of training in this particular field.

The question is, therefore, whether the phenomena occur, as stated, or whether they do not. It is useless to deny them offhand, and *a priori*, since we know far too little about the universe to say just what phenomena are possible and what are not. In a general sense, doubtless, we all feel that there is a certain limit to the "possible," and that, when it is asserted that certain phenomena occur, which phenomena are beyond the bounds of what we consider possible and rational, these phenomena did not really occur but that there must have been some mistake in the evidence or the record, which, if discovered, would have enabled us to explain the phenomena by normal laws. It is only natural that each one of us

[1] *Dialectical Committee Report*, p. 278.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 265; *Fragments of Science*, pp. 336-42.
[3] *Planchette, the Despair of Science.*
[4] *Riddle of the Universe*, p. 305.

should have this innate sense of the possible and the impossible, but we should also remember that in each one of us is this sense limited differently, so that what would be perfectly possible and even rational to one man, would be quite impossible and the height of absurdity to another! And it is just here that the spirit of toleration should be shown, in investigations such as these, where so little is known that it is certainly unsafe to dogmatize and assert, in too offhand a manner, the limits of the possible. Unless we are omniscient, and know all the laws of nature, we cannot say what is possible and what is not. What the masses think, in these matters, is of no consequence, since we know that the crowd is always behind the times in its knowledge and beliefs,[1] so that the whole question is merely one of *facts*, which should be capable of scientific proof or disproof; it is at least entitled to scientific investigation.[2]

As Professor Hyslop so forcibly stated,[3] "the phenomena cannot be laughed away," merely, since "the phenomena exist whether they are investigated or not."[4] It is for science to see whether they *do* exist, or whether they are merely the results of fraud and trickery, or natural laws and causes, or the combination of all of these. Needless to say, this is a perfectly legitimate scientific problem, and should be considered as such.

At the same time I would insist, as strongly as my severest critic, that the *standard* of evidence should be kept very high in this field, where trickery and fraud are so common, and credulity so universal. The scientist has little in common with many spiritualists, and rightly so. His temper of mind is as different as possible. It is the object of the Society for Psychical Research and psychical researchers generally to fill this gap, and to bridge over the space between the religious and scientific worlds. It is to make the question of the

[1] *The Crowd*, p. 72-3.

[2] In this connection, see *Proc. S. P. R.*, Vol. XVIII., pp. 5-6; Mason, *Telepathy*, p. 110; *Evidence for a Future Life*, p. 212; *There is No Death*, pp. 51-2; *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 14, 15, 35; Hutchinson, *Dreams*, pp. 247, 250, 298, etc.

[3] *Science and a Future Life*, p. 364.

[4] *Dialectical Committee Report*, p. 231.

survival of the soul one of *scientific evidence, i. e.*, one that can be settled by actual experiment, just as any other scientific question can be settled by that means.[1] It is useless to say that this can never be so. Spiritualism can be made as scientific and as legitimate a branch of investigation as any other branch whatever; it all depends on the spirit in which the problem is attacked. No one, who has been saturated with the scientific spirit to any degree, can fail to appreciate that there are many objections to psychic phenomena, many of these being objections to a future life. But it must be acknowledged that these considerations would be valueless in face of evidence which would prove this theorizing erroneous. It is not, after all, a question of theory, but of fact. If the facts go to prove a future life, or the reality of the phenomena investigated, whatever their nature, it must be acknowledged that theory would be helpless in face of the facts. What the S. P. R. and investigators along these lines have endeavored to do, therefore, is to place to one side the theoretical considerations entirely, and to devote themselves to a study of the facts. If these are ever established, it must be granted that the path is cut for a scientific inquiry into psychical research phenomena.

It must be acknowledged, on the other hand, that psychical research is as yet in a very crude and imperfect state, and that next to nothing is known of the laws underlying the phenomena observed. That is only to be expected, in a science so new as this. It must be remembered that, whereas all the other sciences had been preparing for the great strides of the past century for two hundred and fifty years, the science of psychical research has only just begun. When that length of time shall have elapsed, and no results are perceived, *then* it will be time enough to begin wondering whether the investigation of psychical research phenomena is waste of time or not! Until that length of time shall have elapsed, however, it is both useless and premature to specu-

[1] This idea has, of course, more or less influenced the thought of the scientific world since the publication of Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*.

late as to the ultimate outcome or utility of the phenomena observed.

I wish to break off, just here, and consider this question of "utility" at some length, since it is the question most frequently asked of all those interested in psychical research problems in a serious way. It is asked: what is the *use* of these facts, these phenomena? Even granting that they exist in reality, that they are real facts in nature, and not the results, merely, of disordered imaginations or fraud alone; still, of what use are the phenomena? What practical benefit can be derived from their study?

Were this question put to me I should reply, as I replied several years ago, *à propos* to this very point: "What is the *use* of any scientific investigation, except to find out facts generally unknown and unrecognized? Every new truth acquired, every scrap of information gained by persistent effort is of great importance in helping us to understand and unravel the mysteries of the universe which surround us on every side; and especially is this the case in our attempts to understand that by which and through which every phenomenon is known and understood — the human mind." [1] The mere fact of asking the question shows a sordid, narrow outlook, colored and influenced only by that which will materially and at once benefit the investigator himself, with no thought for the welfare of the human race, present or future, or any idea of the use of work and effort not obviously conducted for the benefit of the individual himself. A selfish outlook, truly! It is, moreover, a most unscientific outlook. No matter whether the facts seem to indicate any useful purpose or not, so long as they *are* facts science must investigate them, or itself cease to be scientific. Its duty is not to interpret the facts discovered, but to establish their *reality*. "No matter where an unprejudiced search after truth may lead an investigator," says Doctor Ostwald,[2] "if his work is that of an honest scientist, it must and will finally turn out to be for the benefit of mankind." Mr. W. M.

[1] *Metaphysical Magazine*, January-March, 1903, p. 198.
[2] *Individuality and Immortality*, p. 3.

Wilkinson, in a letter to Professor Faraday, asked that gentleman if *Cui bono?* "has been introduced into science as a bar to inquiry, and if so, when?" [1]

It is useless to talk of the "use" of any scientific fact; the question is: is it a fact at all, or is it not? That, of course, must be ascertained by experiment. But we know that there are many facts that do actually exist, the use of which is not plain to our limited understanding. As Mr. Lang so cleverly remarked, in speaking of psychical research problems in general and apparitions in particular, "What is the 'use' of argon? Why are cockroaches 'permitted?'"

This last remark brings me to another consideration, the objection that is frequently raised by the religious to the study of these phenomena. "These are hidden secrets," they assert, "which God does not intend us to fathom or know. God did not intend that phenomena such as these should ever happen, in any such manner as to render it possible that they should be subjected to scientific investigation, so-called, and often subjected indeed to a materialistic interpretation. The phenomena *cannot* exist, as stated; it would be against all reason, no less than the evidence of Holy Writ!"

To my mind, at least, the answer to the whole objection again sums itself up into the one question: Do the phenomena really occur? That is the whole issue. If they really *do* occur, then God (if we grant that there is a God who "permits" things) *must* let the phenomena occur, since they really take place. If He did not permit them, then they would not occur. Consequently, there would be nothing to fear on that score. If, on the other hand, the phenomena are proved to really exist, then God *must* permit them, for otherwise their occurrence would be an impossibility. Again, it is merely a question of evidence, of fact, which only actual experiment can ever determine.

But these phenomena are immensely important from every conceivable standpoint. I wish especially to draw attention to the most important result of studying these phenomena — this research — the possibility of thereby proving a future

[1] *Planchette*, by Epes Sargent, p. 17.

life. "If," says R. D. Owen,[1] "if it should prove that through the phenomena referred to we may reach some knowledge of our next phase of life, it will be impossible longer to deny the practical importance of studying them." Or, as Professor Hyslop so well said,[2] "If we should add to telepathy a process involving clairvoyance, premonition, and the existence of discarnate spirits, we shall have extended our knowledge of the cosmos far beyond all that physical science has done. And yet this is called 'pitifully little!'" Indeed, what can there be of such vast moment to the human race as the settlement of these problems? Flammarion says,[3] "If it" (psychical research) "helps us to know something of the human soul, and affords us scientific demonstration of its survival, it will give humanity a progress superior to any she has yet received by the gradual evolution of all the other sciences put together." For, indeed, as Myers so beautifully remarked,[4] "What other effort after knowledge is equally worth our pains? What possibility lies before mankind of equal magnitude with this possibility of demonstrating the existence of an unseen world, and man's communication therewith or existence therein?"

Finally, it must be remembered that, by the phenomena of psychical research, and by those only, can a future life of any sort ever be proved to exist, and so long as this proof is not forthcoming, the scientific world will continue its present attitude. It is hardly too much to say that in psychical research phenomena lies the weal or woe, the ultimate happy fate or disastrous destiny of the human race.

There is, again, an objection that is raised to the study of psychical research phenomena that they induce certain morbid or abnormal conditions in the medium, if not in the sitter, and should not be studied in consequence. A typical example of this attitude is to be found in a work entitled, *Spiritualism and Allied Causes and Conditions of Nervous Derangement*, by Doctor Hammond. Another good ex-

[1] *Footfalls*, p. 509.
[2] *Enigmas of Psychical Research*, p. 395.
[3] *The Unknown*, p. vi.
[4] *Science and a Future Life*, p. 45.

ample is a little book entitled the *Philosophy of Spiritualism*, by Dr. F. R. Marvin, which has a chapter on "The Pathology and Treatment of Mediomania," treating the whole thing as a diseased condition of the nervous system, that should be treated by the regular medical methods in vogue! As D. D. Lum said,[1] "The scientist would see in the young man, not a *medium* to be developed, but a patient requiring treatment." The same sort of statements are to be found in a few books of later date, though there is very little that has been said on this line of late, except, perhaps, the absurd statements contained in *The Great Psychological Crime*.

Now, if we come to inquire a little more closely into the reasons for this attitude toward mediums, we find that it is because they (the scientists) have always assumed that any characteristics that may appear out of the ordinary, in any individual, are necessarily abnormal and signs of degeneracy; and it never appears to have occurred to them to ask themselves the primary question, May not these conditions and states be merely *different* from the ordinary, or may they not be states illustrative of a higher plane in the evolutionary process — representing conditions which are to be the normal conditions in some life to come? May they not, in fact, be in some measure supernormal instead of abnormal, evolutionary instead of devolutionary? This was the view that Myers adopted, as we know, and which he worked out so beautifully and at such length in his *Human Personality* (Vol. II., p. 85, etc.). The whole confusion arose from the fact that many scientists (Charcot, Janet, etc.) experimented on hysterical and otherwise abnormal individuals, and then they asserted that psychic phenomena were found in hysterical and abnormal persons! The cart was obviously placed before the horse, though very many scientists seem unable to grasp that fact. It was not the psychic phenomena that induced the abnormal bodily condition, but the abnormal bodily condition merely *accompanied* the psychic phenomena, *i. e.*, the two sets of facts were *coincidental*, but did not depend upon one another. If these scientists had experi-

[1] *The Spiritual Delusion*, p. 20.

mented on healthy persons, they would have found that psychic phenomena occurred in their presence in the same manner as in the cases where the medium was diseased or otherwise abnormal. I discussed this question at considerable length in my article in *The Metaphysical Magazine* (January-March, 1903, pp. 184-94), and quoted a statement of Miss Goodrich-Freer's which I requote here: "In view of certain statements that are current as to the physical conditions of crystal-gazing, I wish to say, as emphatically as possible, that in my own case these experiments are neither the cause nor the effect of any morbid condition. I can say positively, from frequent experience, that to attempt experiments when mind and body are not entirely at ease is absolute waste of time. The very conditions which might make crystal-gazing a fatiguing and exhausting process, render it impossible. I can with equal certainty disclaim, for myself, the allegation that success in inducing hallucinations of this kind is due in any way to an *état maladif*. The four years during which I have carried on experiments have been amongst the healthiest in my life." [1]

Doctor Hodgson, in replying to certain criticisms in this line, also said, *à propos* of Mrs. Piper: "I emphasized the fact that Mrs. Piper's trances did not involve any personal suffering by quoting a statement from Mrs. Piper herself that she had never suffered any physical pain in connection with her trances, and that during the past two years, she had experienced better health than before since she was thirteen years old." [2]

All this goes to show that, though psychical phenomena may *accompany* many abnormal states of the organism, they are not *inseparable* from such states, but may, in fact, occur through a perfectly normal organism. I cannot do better, in this connection, than quote the remarks of Doctor Maxwell, where he says:

"Those who have come under the refining influences of education, instruction, or rank, are the most sensitive,

[1] See also *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 vols.
[2] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XIV., p. 395.

'touchy;' but this sensitiveness ought not to be interpreted as a sign of degeneracy. Certain contemporary *savants* consider every deviation from the normal state as a blemish! Such a way of thinking implies a veritable *a priori* judgment, a begging of the question, which is detrimental to the true development of scientific thought. The normal man is only a mean term; there are individuals who are inferior to the mean, there are others who are superior to it. . . . The nervous system of the imaginary average man is but an abstraction; in reality, the sensibility of the nervous system of the different human individuals varies immensely. A negative variation will bring beings who are less sensitive, less delicate than those of the average type; a variation in the positive sense will give individuals of a more sensitive and more delicate type. To consider either as abnormal is only grammatically true: the former is *infra*-normal, the latter *supra*-normal. The first have not reached the average level, and the second have passed it. . . . We might just as reasonably insist that Europeans are in degeneration, because they are more emotional and more sensitive to pain than certain savage tribes. . . . The attitude of certain learned centres — it is with intention I do not say the most cultured — is, to me, similar to that of ecclesiastical authorities in the middle ages. . . . Their attitude prevents the most cultured, the most capable mediums from allowing their psychic faculties to become known. If these mediums speak of visions, a douche would be recommended! If they caused a table to move without contact, the words hysteria and fraud would be heard. Is it surprising they should hide their gifts? We ought to consider mediums as precious beings, as forerunners of the future type of our race. Why should we only see degeneracy round us? Why should we not see superior beings ahead of us, beacons, as it were, on the route we have to follow?" [1] Andrew Lang has some very humorous remarks to offer on this subject also: see his *Dreams and Ghosts*, and the Introduction to Thomas's *Crystal Gazing*, p. xlv, etc.

[1] *Metapsychical Phenomena*, pp. 61, 394-5.

I cannot now stop to consider the objections that have been raised to the study of spiritualism, from the religious standpoint. I have stated my own position in this question on p. 326, and those individuals who desire proof that the study of spiritualism is not contrary to Biblical teachings I would refer to the first 181 pages of Robert Dale Owen's *Debatable Land between This World and the Next*, which is virtually a dedication to the clergy. Indeed, how any one who accepts the miraculous element in the Gospels [1] can reject the modern phenomena, or rather the theoretical possibility of the modern phenomena, is beyond the comprehension of the present writer. As Florence Marryat pointed out,[2] "From the period when the Lord God walked in the Garden of Eden, and the angels came to Abraham's tent, and pulled Lot out of the doomed city; when the witch of Endor raised up Samuel, and Balaam's ass spoke, and Ezekiel wrote that the hair of his head stood up because a 'spirit' passed before him, to the presence of Satan with Jesus in the desert, and the reappearance of Moses and Elias, the resurrection of Christ himself and his talking and eating with his disciples, and the final account of John being caught up to Heaven to receive the Revelations, *all is spiritualism, and nothing else*. . . . If it be impossible that the spirits of the departed can communicate with men, the Bible must be simply a collection of fabulous statements; if it be wrong to speak with spirits, all the men whose histories are therein related were sinners, and the Almighty helped them to sin. . . ." A most rational account of the Old Testament miracles, explained from the spiritualist's standpoint, will be found on pp. 119-43 of Hudson's *Scientific Demonstration of a Future Life*, and of the New Testament miracles in his *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, pp. 338-99.

But it is not my intention to enter the disputed field of theological discussion in a book of this character, which is intended to be devoted to the scientific side of the question altogether, the examination of fact. Those of my readers

[1] *V. The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, by Dr. A. B. Bruce
[2] *There Is No Death*, p. 16.

who are interested in the theoretical and religious side of the question may find many works in which it is discussed at great length.

Philosophy is virtually useless when it comes to this question of the survival of the soul — of "life after death." Whether the soul continues to exist apart from the physical organism is not a question that can be settled by *a priori* speculation, but by facts alone. The question before us is not a philosophical question, but a scientific one. The position of the scientific world is simply this: is there or is there not any scientific evidence that thought and consciousness continue to exist apart from brain-functioning? They are not concerned with questions as to the nature of the soul, or whether "reincarnation" or "conditional immortality," or what not, is the most rational fate of the soul; their question is, *has* man a soul? And to those who at once reply "yes," they say, if so, show me evidence of the fact, for otherwise I have every reason to doubt that any such thing as a "soul" of a conscious sort exists. In this world, they will say, the only knowledge of any mental or spiritual life we know is invariably bound up with the nervous tissue, and, apart from the functioning of such nervous tissue, we have no knowledge of any mental or spiritual life existing. If it does exist, where is the evidence for that fact? and if such proof is not forthcoming, it is only natural to suppose that the average scientist should continue in his present lines of skepticism. If a future life is ever to be proved, therefore, the proof must be scientific evidence, and not argument and speculation. As Professor Hyslop remarked, "Philosophy is helpless and worthless for proving a future life."

It is to the credit of psychical researchers that they have realized this fact, and attempted to meet science on its own ground, by producing the required facts in the shape of phenomena which, apparently at least, prove the existence of a soul of some sort, active and alive apart from the physical organism. It must be pointed out that the earlier investigators in this field fully realized the difficulties that must be encountered, and the importance of *facts*, as such, quite

apart from any theoretical deductions that were to be drawn from the facts.[1] Crookes and other men of his type merely recorded the phenomena, without attempting to account for them. Crookes especially stated (p. 4) that he had seen nothing to convince him of the spiritual theory, though he had seen many facts he could not explain by any of the known laws in nature.

In any discussion on spiritualism, therefore, we must confine ourselves to the real question at issue, and not be led off into various side issues, which, in reality, have no real bearing on the case at all. The real question is simply this: are there or are there not certain phenomena which would seem to suggest that a soul of some sort continues to exist after the death of the physical body? This can be made a scientific problem, since we have made it one of evidence, of fact, and it can be discussed and settled as any other problem can. Whether certain material objects move or not, or whether they are conveyed through closed doors or not, is beside the case, and has nothing to do with the question at issue; and hence their proof or disproof can have no lasting influence upon spiritualism or psychical research inquiry. The real problems still remain open, unsolved.

Professor Hyslop summed up the whole question in his *Science and a Future Life* (pp. 94-5), as follows:

"With philosophic and scientific speculations on the nature of matter or spirit disqualified by the facts which show that consciousness appears to be a function of the organism, whatever the 'nature' of matter or spirit, the only resource is to see whether there are phenomena that will render probable or prove that consciousness survives as a fact, not as a consequence of some speculative theory about the 'nature' of things; for the 'nature' of things has to be determined scientifically by the facts which show what it actually does, not by what we can imagine to be possible. Can, therefore, any facts be shown that at least suggest the probability that we survive death?"

That is the whole question in a nutshell. Spiritualism is

[1] *V.* Crookes's *Researches in Spiritualism*, pp. 4, 10, etc.

a psychological and not a physical problem, or should be considered so. Even when genuine physical phenomena are observed, the interest, from the spiritualist's standpoint, is the amount of *intelligence* connected with the manifestations; the manifestations themselves falling into altogether another category. They should be investigated, it is true, just as any unexplained facts should be investigated; but they are quite apart from the real problem of "spiritualism," and have no real influence on the main problems concerned. It is most important that this distinction should be kept clearly in mind.

It is extraordinary that Professor Wallace takes the precisely inverse view of this, in this question, considering the physical problems the important ones, and asserting that "the purely mental phenomena are generally of no use as evidence to non-spiritualists, except in those few cases where rigid tests can be applied; but they are so intimately connected with the physical series, and often so interwoven with them, that no one who has sufficient experience to satisfy him of the reality of the former, fails to see that the latter form part of the general system, and are dependent on the same agencies."[1] This, it seems to me, is placing the cart fairly before the horse. It is only fair to state, however, that this was written before the evidence in the case of Mrs. Piper had assumed its present proportions and character.

I wish to say a few words on the subject of the "conditions" that are imposed upon the sitters at all spiritualistic meetings. It is hardly necessary to point out that the vast bulk of these so-called "conditions" are merely imposed by the medium in order to render possible the operation of certain tricks and fraudulent manipulations which more exact scientific conditions would render impossible. If the medium finds that he is unable to produce certain phenomena at certain times because he finds that the watch placed upon him is too strict, he asserts that the conditions are not favorable, and makes his sitters change places (allowing some sitter a little less vigilant to sit next to him), or in other ways ar-

[1] *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 209.

ranges the conditions of the séance to suit himself. The sitters cannot do otherwise than accept these conditions, as no phenomena at all will occur unless they are fulfilled. There is no choice in the matter.

It must be pointed out, on the other hand, that, if genuine phenomena ever occur at all, then it is not only probable, but certain that they occur in accordance with laws of their own, which laws the medium may be supposed to know more about than any one else, since the phenomena occur through him. Just as it would be absurd for any one knowing nothing of photography to insist that the photographer produce photographs without the use of the dark room and developer, just so is it absurd to lay down rules and laws in this work, about which we know nothing certain. "Conditions" of some kind are most certainly to be expected, and they must be granted, whether these "conditions" are physical positions or altered mental states. The "conditions" asked or required must be granted, if we expect to receive any phenomena at all.

It may be objected to this, however, that I thereby allow the medium opportunity to cheat his sitters, and therefore abandon the scientific attitude toward these phenomena. I reply that I have by no means done so. I admit that certain "conditions" are very likely required, and should be granted — *up to the point when they cease to prohibit the practice of fraud.* The moment the "conditions" requested are such that they render fraud possible, then they should cease to be granted, or, if granted, the phenomena that transpire at that séance ought to be considered as not produced under test conditions, and hence of no scientific value. The whole question is whether the imposed conditions are such as to render fraud possible or not.

One other consideration. The fact that so much fraud has been discovered, in the history of spiritualism, does not imply that all the physical phenomena that have occurred in the history of the subject, since its initiation, have been fraudulent, but rather that there must, at the first, have been some genuine manifestations to copy. Andrew Lang has

called attention to the extraordinary similarity and agreement between the various psychic phenomena that occur, in various parts of the globe, and in the same part at different periods of the world's history. This, in itself, is a most striking fact. Of course fraudulent mediums can learn tricks from one another, and it is not only probable but certain that the vast majority of modern occult phenomena have been merely handed around in this manner from one fraudulent medium to another. But it is hardly to be supposed that savages, in various parts of the earth, should also exchange this information on the latest methods of producing certain manifestations! And the question at once arises also, whom did the *first* mediums copy? There may be much fraud in modern spiritualism, in fact, I am disposed to believe that fully 98 per cent. of the phenomena, both mental and physical, are fraudulently produced, but a careful study of the evidence, contemporary and historic, has convinced me that there must have been *some* genuine phenomena at the commencement of this movement, in order that the first mediums may have copied them by fraudulent means, and that a certain percentage of the phenomena occurring to-day is genuine. As Mr. Lowell said,[1] "A counterfeit implies a genuine, and a shammer something to sham."

I emphasize this the more strongly because of the attitude certain psychical researchers have assumed in this matter, they having a tendency to assert that all the observed phenomena must necessarily be fraudulent, because some are proved to be so. A number of phenomena of a certain class are proved to be fraudulently produced, and they consequently assert that *all* the recorded phenomena of that class must be fraudulently produced also! Now, although this method is a very tempting one (I, myself, have felt the temptation in the preparation of this volume, not to give certain historic cases their due value, because so much has been explained by fraud?) it seems to me that it is a very unscientific and unfair one to pursue. I entirely disagree with the method of attack by Mr. Podmore, on the Home

[1] *Occult Japan*, p. 89.

séances, conducted by Sir William Crookes, for example. It seems to me that Mr. Podmore has attacked the *weak* evidence, the tests that are more or less easy to explain as conjuring, and suggestive of trickery, and pointed out their defects; and then, when he came to the phenomena that could not be explained on his hypothesis, he calmly asserted that they were due to hallucination! Why were not the simpler phenomena due to hallucination also, if that is the case? It seems to me that Mr. Podmore has accepted just as much of the Home séances as he cared to accept, and asserted the rest did not occur at all, which is to me a very unscientific way of looking at the matter. If the phenomena were genuine, on the other hand, it may very readily be granted that the same laws and the same forces which were operative to produce the more startling effects were also operative in the production of the lesser. The difference would be one of degree only. I have so much admiration for Mr. Podmore's general method of handling the subject, however, that I refrain from further comment of an adverse character upon his work. We are all open to weaknesses and imperfections in our judgment of certain matters. Mr. Podmore's weakness seems to me to be to over-generalize from a limited number of facts.

After the above criticisms, I am glad to be able to quote a passage from Mr. Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism* (Vol. I., p. 250), with which I heartily agree. It is:

"We may feel assured that, in one form or another, the belief in such marvels, as it has revived again and again in the past, will manifest itself again and again in the generations to come; and history shows that those who sneer at such credulity without attempting to understand its causes are perhaps themselves not the least likely to fall victims, precisely because they do not understand." Therefore, our first duty is to understand as much as possible in this line of research, in order that we may not be led into believing anything which is untrue; that is not, in fact, what it appears to be. One of the most essential qualifications of any one undertaking the investigation of psychical research phe-

nomena (besides being possessed of an open and impartial mind, and what Professor Sidgwick so well called "the higher common sense"), is that he should be thoroughly familiar with all the modes and methods of trickery that are in use, in order that he may detect the spurious, and appraise the genuine; and it is the object of this book to enable him to do that, and is not by any means an attempt to divert him from the path of investigation, or to assert that spiritualism is false from start to finish, and that no genuine phenomena are to be found by the impartial searcher after truth. Such is by no means my belief. If I had to adhere to any creed now in existence, that creed would be spiritism, beyond a doubt. Even the author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium*, a man who, for twenty years, *produced* the phenomena that converted hundreds to the belief, and who knows the disgusting details of the frauds practised from A to Z, stated (p. 321) that he himself was "more spiritualist than anything else," and advised his readers to go on investigating, for, "you will find in the chaff that is so plentiful, some good grains."

Rightly interpreted, modern spiritualism is nothing more than the belief that a conscious soul of some sort continues to exist after the death of the body, and that it is possible, by certain means, at certain times, to get into communication with that soul. The former of these two beliefs is held by every one who is not a materialist; while the second is simply a question of evidence. It seems to be a most sane and reasonable creed. The sanest summing-up of this question that I have ever come across is to be found in a little pamphlet entitled *Spiritualism: the Argument in Brief*, by Rev. Austin Phelps, and I cannot refrain from quoting this passage here. It runs:

"But the case which spiritualism as a religious system presents to us concerns chiefly a residue of facts, after very abundant deductions from its claims as a whole. Take the crude mass of the phenomena alleged, and set aside a certain proportion, large or small, as you please, to the account of the rascality which the system somehow attracts to itself, as

the ship's bottom does barnacles. Strike off another portion, as probably due to the honest exaggeration of credulous or prejudiced observers. Cancel another section, as explicable by 'electric' laws, or by principles of the animal economy, and specially by laws of disease well known to science. Ignore, if you must, everything else that is purely physical, as likely to be one day explained by physical laws yet to be discovered. Eliminate something more for the incertitude of psychological research, when pressed beyond the facts of the general consciousness. After all these deductions, spiritualism is apparently right in claiming that a residuum of fact remains, which goes straight to the point of proving the presence and activity of extra-human intelligence. For one, I must concede this, at least, as a plausible hypothesis" (pp. 24-5).

CHAPTER XIX

RAPS [1]

THE methods that are employed in fraudulently producing raps have been described on pp. 77-83, and for any further detailed consideration of historical cases I refer my reader to Mr. Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, before mentioned. In a volume of this character, I cannot even attempt to touch upon the evidence for rapping, as a genuine phenomenon (that the historical cases afford), but must content myself with quoting a few of the most remarkable cases on record (or, at least, what appear to me to be the most remarkable, for doubtless opinions differ as to the relative value of the respective cases), and stating my reasons for believing that such phenomena do sometimes occur, however rare such genuine cases may be. I may begin by quoting one or two cases that appear to me to be typical, and as affording the best evidence that I have been able to find: and it must be admitted that the evidence is at least imposing and suggestive, if not absolutely convincing.

"On one occasion," writes Professor Barrett,[2] "when no one else was in the room, and it was broad daylight as usual, I asked my young friend the medium to put her hands against the wall and see how far she could stretch her feet back from the wall without tumbling down. This she did,

[1] I should like to say a few words in answer to the objection that it would be undignified for spirits to waste their time rapping on tables, etc. (1) It is simply a question of *fact* — not speculation — whether they do or not. (2) "If Queen Victoria or George Washington wished to enter a room, in this world, it was not considered beneath their dignity to tap on the door" (Savage, *Can Telepathy Explain?* pp. 30-1). (3) It is highly probable — by analogy from the Piper case — that the spirit is unaware it is manifesting *in raps*. That may be merely the physical form in which the thoughts are automatically registered.

[2] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., p. 30.

and, whilst in this constrained condition, with the muscles of the arms and legs all in tension, I asked for the knocks to come. Immediately a brisk pattering of raps followed my request. All the while the child remained quite motionless. My reason for making this experiment was to test the late Doctor Carpenter's muscular theory of the cause of the sounds. Had Doctor Carpenter been present, I feel quite sure he would have admitted that here, at any rate, that theory fell through."

The next series of experiments are those of Sir William Crookes. They will be found described in full in his book, *Researches in Spiritualism*, to which I would refer the reader. I might summarize one series of experiments, perhaps, as follows. On a table was placed a tightly stretched membrane, forming a sort of drumhead. The lower side of this rested on the table, so that the apparatus really resembled a tambourine more than anything else. Now, without having the apparatus explained to her in any way, a lady was brought into the room, and requested to place her hands *on the table* on which the drumhead rested, so that no contact whatever was possible between the membrane and the hands of the medium. But, to make assurance doubly sure, Sir William placed his hands over those of the medium, in order to detect any conscious or unconscious movement on her part. (All this was in full light.) The account goes on: "Presently percussive noises were heard on the parchment, resembling the dropping of grains of sand on its surface. At each percussion a fragment of graphite which I had placed on the membrane was seen to be projected upward about 1-50th of an inch. . . . Sometimes the sounds were as rapid as those from an induction coil, whilst at others they were more than a second apart" (p. 39).

The description of the various *kinds* of raps noticed at different times is most interesting. On p. 86 we read: "The popular name of 'raps' conveys a very erroneous impression of this class of phenomena. At different times, during my experiments, I have heard delicate ticks, as with the point of a pin, a cascade of sharp sounds as from an induction coil

in full work, detonations in the air, sharp metallic taps, a cracking like that heard when a frictional machine is at work, sounds like scratching, the twittering as of a bird," etc.

Again, on p. 87, Sir William writes:

"I have heard them (the raps) in a living tree, on a sheet of glass, on a stretched iron wire, on a stretched membrane, a tambourine, on the roof of a cab and on the floor of a theatre. Moreover, actual contact is not always necessary; I have heard these sounds proceeding from the floor, walls, etc., when the medium's hands and feet were held, when she was standing on a chair, when she was suspended in a swing from the ceiling, when she was enclosed in a wire cage, and when she had fallen fainting on a sofa. I have heard them on a glass harmonicon, I have felt them on my own shoulder and under my own hands. I have heard them on a sheet of paper, held between the fingers by a piece of thread passed through one corner. With a full knowledge of the numerous theories which have been started, chiefly in America, to explain these sounds, I have tested them in every way that I could devise, until there has been no escape from the conviction that they were true objective occurrences not produced by trickery or mechanical means."

The next experiments I shall mention are those conducted by Professor Maxwell, quoting them from his *Metapsychical Phenomena*. No one has made a closer study of raps and telekinetic phenomena than the author of this work, and his experiments have all been conducted *recently*, thus disposing of one very forcible objection to the older series of experiments.

I shall first quote some general observations of the author, passing on to accounts of actual phenomena witnessed by him. These seem to confirm the observations of Sir William Crookes in a very striking manner, agreeing with them, in many respects, in great detail. For this reason it would certainly appear that the phenomena observed by these gentlemen were genuine; otherwise the coincidence is most difficult to explain.

"Raps may be given upon various articles, with or without contact, and even at a certain distance from the medium.

I have observed some that burst forth as far as nine feet away from the medium. . . . I have heard them on cloth, on the medium's or sitter's garments, etc. I have heard them on pieces of paper placed on the séance-table, on books, on the walls, on tambourines, on small wooden articles, and particularly on the planchette which was used for automatic writing. I have also observed very curious raps with a writing medium, — when he wrote automatically, raps resounded with extreme rapidity at the end of the pencil. I can affirm that the pencil did not strike the table, for several times I very carefully put my hand on the opposite end of the pencil, and I was then able to verify that the sound was produced at the point of the pencil, the pencil remaining all the time, steadily and firmly, on the paper; the raps resounded on the wood of the table, and not on the paper. In this case, of course, the medium held the pencil in his hand" (p. 79). . . . "I have also heard formidable raps with the two young girls (this reminds us of the Fox sisters), fourteen and fifteen years of age, who were called the Agen mediums. I observed these mediums at their own home, and I also heard them twice at Bordeaux, when on each occasion they remained for nearly a month. The raps produced by them are interesting, but they do not seem to me to be demonstrative. . . . When the two girls were in bed, loud raps were heard near their feet, seemingly given on the wood of the bed. We were able to observe the apparent immobility of the children. Raps were also given on the blankets; the raps appeared to be produced under our hands" (p. 76). I do not give this case as a proof of the genuine nature of the raps, but as showing the similar character of the raps, on this occasion, to those of the Fox sisters many years before. Such precise similarity of fraud seems to me to be improbable, while, if the phenomena should be proved to exist, as actual facts in nature, this similarity would be highly interesting and significant. One of the most striking cases I have ever read, however, and one that converted *me* to a belief in the reality of the genuineness of these raps, is the following, which I again quote from Doctor Maxwell's *Meta-*

psychical Phenomena, p. 278. After giving an account of a number of experiences with a psychic, by name M. Meurice (who is not, by the way, a professional medium, but a cultured gentleman, and friend of Doctor Maxwell for many years, and who takes, moreover, but slight interest in the phenomena occurring through him), the passage goes on: "Some of the messages given in this chapter were obtained while out walking with the medium. On such occasions, M. Meurice would put his hand on a walking-stick or on an umbrella; he preferred the latter. 'The raps on the open umbrella are extremely curious,' writes Doctor X. 'We have heard raps on the woodwork and on the silk at one and the same time; it is easy to perceive that the shock actually occurs in the wood, that the molecules of the latter are set in motion. The same thing occurs with the silk; and here observation is even more interesting still; each rap *looks* like a drop of some invisible liquid falling on the silk from a respectable height. The stretched silk of the umbrella is quickly and slightly but surely dented in; sometimes the force with which the raps are given is such as to shake the umbrella. Nothing is more absorbing than the observation of an apparent conversation — by means of the umbrella — between the medium's personifications. Raps, imitating a burst of laughter in response to the observer's remarks, resound on the silk like the rapid play of strong but tiny fingers. When raps on the umbrella are forthcoming, M. Meurice either holds the handle of the umbrella, or some one else does, whilst he simply touches the handle very lightly with his open palm. He never touches the silk.'"

To my mind this is practically convincing. At least I can conceive no better evidence than this, recorded in the way it is, for phenomena of this kind, if we are to trust the observations of others at all. I do not say that this experiment will convince *all* who read it; it would be surprising indeed if it did; but, personally, I can see no reasonable loophole by which a belief in this phenomenon is avoided in such an experiment as the foregoing. Confidence in the recorder, of course, is a very great factor, and though I have never met

either of the gentlemen whose records I quote, their style and manner of recording the phenomena they observed, causes me to have implicit confidence in their record, and to feel that, if I had been there, I should have felt and believed exactly as they did. That, after all, is the great test.

On p. 291, Doctor Maxwell states that he has heard raps occur simultaneously on the chair, the floor, and on a table standing "a foot away" from the medium. And on pp. 309-10 is reported the following most interesting experiment:

"Then I tried an experiment. . . . I bade M. Meurice sit in an armchair and lie perfectly still. I placed his arm at about one foot from the table and told him to *fancy* he lifted his arm and struck the table, without, of course, making the slightest movement.

"We obtained some excellent raps in this way. This is a fine experiment, for it shows clearly the production of raps by the *will* — the direct, conscious, and personal will.

"We tried three series of experiments: six raps in each series were willed; we received four raps in each, that is to say, 66 per cent. of success. The raps were loud, one was double. The medium nearly fainted after this experiment, but came round quickly, though he has not been well since.

"His sensations were: (1) absence of sensation in the arm with which we were experimenting; (2) a kind of breeze issuing from his shoulder. After willing the raps, he was never sure of success, he did not feel the wood had been touched. Sensibility appeared to be exteriorized."

A very interesting case has recently been reported in *The Annals of Psychical Science* (September, 1905), by M. Hjalmar Wijk, under the title: "Karin: A Study of Spontaneous Rappings." The phenomena appear to be very well substantiated in many ways, but here we read that:

"The various attempts made by Karin to influence the phenomenon by her will seem to show that such influence, when it took place, never could be exercised *directly*, but only by way of a subconscious mental state that lay beyond the control of her will" (p. 155).

This is doubtless the usual method of control, in such cases.

The conscious mind seems to have direct control over the phenomena only in the rarest cases. The directive mind is the subconscious, and I venture to suggest that the analogy between these phenomena and those of experimental thought-transference is close. It is certainly suggestive. M. Wijk has suggested a most ingenious method of bringing these phenomena under control, which I cannot refrain from quoting now. Realizing that the phenomena are practically always under the influence of the subconscious mind, and hence removed from our direct control, in most cases, he goes on:

"The phenomena presented by mediums are, in general, like the rapping in this case, the expression of an intelligence that one may generally assume as having its root in the medium's secondary consciousness. Should we not, by means of *hypnosis*, be able to get at this secondary consciousness through suggestion; transform it as we please, and in that way subordinate the physical phenomena connected with it to our will — produce them, stop them, or modify them at pleasure?" (p. 160).

These quotations will doubtless be sufficient to show the reader that raps *do* occasionally occur, under conditions that render it practically impossible to account for them on any theory of fraud. At least, the cases are strong and numerous enough, it seems to me, to form a *prima facie* case for investigation, which should accordingly be undertaken by a body of men especially fitted for the task. It need scarcely be pointed out that, if genuine raps do occur, it is a most important fact for science, and the question should be definitely settled, if possible, one way or the other. Yet, strange to say, the question of raps has been all but entirely overlooked by all investigators in this field, even the S. P. R. having ignored their study. Well may Mr. Bennett exclaim, "Is there, through the whole series of the *Proceedings* and *Journals*, the record of one single attempt to solve the problem of the 'rap,' or even to settle the question whether the rap is an abnormal fact or not?"[1]

The Society would doubtless reply to this that the silence

[1] *Twenty Years of Psychical Research*, p. 48.

has been an enforced one, due to a scarcity of phenomena, rather than to any unwillingness to investigate the phenomena should they occur; and that is doubtless very largely true. Still, one feels that this question of raps has not received the attention it deserves, as it is a most interesting and a most important question to settle one way or the other.

Before closing this chapter on raps, there are one or two additional facts I should like to bring forward, as tending to show that genuine raps do sometimes occur, however uncontrolled and sporadic these phenomena may be. The indications are two in number, and I shall discuss them separately. They are: (1) The distinct *peculiarity of the sound*, which could not, apparently, be produced by any fraudulent means; and (2) the *intelligence displayed by the raps*, — they frequently displaying a knowledge of facts unknown to the sitters, or a peculiarity of their own, which renders it highly improbable, if not quite impossible, that they were produced, consciously or unconsciously, by the medium or sitters themselves. Let me quote one or two cases by way of illustration.

(1) *Cases illustrating a distinct peculiarity of sound.*

The first cases of this character I quote from Jacolliot's *Occult Science in India*, p. 231. The author is describing a séance held with a Hindu fakir, this taking place on the veranda of M. Jacolliot's own house. He goes on:

"The fakir was already in position, with both hands extended toward an immense bronze vase full of water. Within five minutes the vase commenced to rock to and fro on its base, and approach the fakir gently and with a regular motion. As the distance diminished, metallic sounds escaped from it, as if some one had struck it with a steel rod. At certain times the blows were so numerous and quick that they produced a sound similar to that made by a hail-storm upon a metal roof.

"I asked Covindasamy if I could give directions, and he consented without hesitation. The vase, which was still under the performer's influence, advanced, receded, or stood

still, according to my request. At one time, at my command, the blows changed into that of a continuous roll, like that of a drum; at another, on the contrary, they succeeded each other with the slowness and regularity of the ticking of a clock. I asked to have the blows struck every ten seconds, and I compared them with the progress of the second-hand upon the face of my watch. Then loud, sharp strokes were heard, for a minute and two-thirds" (p. 231).

Again, on pp. 246-7, we read the following most interesting account:

"'The Pitris have departed,' said the Hindu, 'because their means of terrestrial communication was broken. Listen! They are coming back again!'

"As he uttered these words, he imposed his hands above one of those immense copper platters inlaid with silver, such as are used by wealthy natives for dice playing, and almost immediately there ensued such a rapid and violent succession of blows or knocks that it might have been taken for a hail-shower upon a metal roof, and I thought I saw (the reader will observe that I do not express myself positively in this respect) a succession of phosphorescent lights (plain enough to be visible in broad daylight) pass to and fro across the platter in every direction. This phenomenon ceased or was repeated at the fakir's pleasure."

The most convincing case that is given is, perhaps, the following, however, for the reason that the raps occurred in the *absence* of the fakir, when he had predicted they would occur. At the séance it had been stated that raps would occur in M. Jacolliot's own room, at a certain hour, he being alone at the time. Accordingly:

"As soon as it was dark, I examined all the different rooms in the apartment, in the most careful manner, and made sure that nobody was concealed in them. I then raised the drawbridge, and thus cut off all communication from the outside.

"At the hour named I thought I heard two blows struck against the wall of my room. I walked toward the spot from which the sound seemed to come, when my steps were

suddenly arrested by a sharp blow, which appeared to be produced from the glass shade that protected the hanging-lamp against gnats and night-butterflies. A few more sounds were heard at unequal intervals in the cedar rafters of the ceiling, and that was all. I walked toward the end of the terrace. It was one of those silvery nights, unknown in our more foggy lands. The vast flood of the sacred river rolled silently along at the foot of the sleeping city; upon one of those steps the outlines of a human form were dimly profiled. It was the fakir of Trivanderam, praying for the repose of his dead" (p. 239).

Now, one most interesting fact in connection with the above description is this. This same peculiar "metallic sound," produced through the agency of a Hindu fakir, is also mentioned by another writer who visited India at another time. The writer in this case is, too, a professional conjurer, "Baron Hartwig Seeman," an observer that certainly cannot be accused of lack of acuteness, or inability to detect fraud, should such have existed. Yet, in ignorance of the observations quoted above,[1] he wrote: "Convinsamy had in the meantime risen, and stretched out his hands toward the fountain, the sprays of which were diminishing. Gradually the fakir stepped nearer, and the water ceased to fall, but in the basin a metallic sound could be heard, similar to the echo after striking a bar of metal. These sounds gradually increased and became so numerous and rapid that they resembled a shower of hail falling on a zinc roof."[2]

(2) I now pass to a brief consideration of the second characteristic of genuine raps, *viz.*, their "personality," their apparent knowledge, and individuality. I cannot stop to quote cases of information given to the sitters by means of

[1] It would have been impossible for Seeman to have read Jacolliot's account, as that was not published until 1884, and Seeman's trip was made in 1872. Nor, on the contrary, would it have been possible for Jacolliot to have seen Seeman's account, for the reason that, although the latter was *written* in 1872, it was not *published* until 1891, so that the two accounts are perfectly independent, and entirely corroborate one another.

[2] *Around the World with a Magician and a Juggler*, p. 54. Compare also the account of Professor Crookes's experiments.

raps, since these may be found in great abundance throughout spiritualistic literature. It need only be said here that much information has repeatedly been given to the sitters (by means of raps) that was not in the conscious mind of any person present, and this, not only in the presence of professional mediums, where fraud is always to be suspected, but in the case of private mediums, and even in the family home circle. I refer my reader to the remarks in the chapters on "Table-turning," and on "Trance," etc., for a further consideration of this aspect of the problem; and, for the present, I pass on to consider certain peculiarities in the raps, which would seem to indicate that they are governed by an intelligence of some sort, and are not produced by voluntary fraud.

Thus, Doctor Maxwell writes:[1]

"The sound of the usual rap, on a table, reminds you of the tonality of an electric spark, while, of course, there are many variations. In the first place, we must note that the tonality of raps differs according to the object upon which they resound. It is easy to recognize by the sound if the raps are given on wood, paper, or cloth. . . . Their rhythm is as varied as their tonality. . . . One of the most curious facts revealed by the observation of raps is their relation with what I call their personification. Each personified individuality manifests its presence by special raps. In a series of experiments that have now lasted for more than two years, I have had frequent opportunity of studying raps personifying diverse entities. . . . Sometimes the raps imitate a burst of laughter; this coincides with either an amusing story related by one of the sitters, or with some mild teasing. . . . Not only do the raps reveal themselves as the productions of intelligent action, they also manifest intelligence in response to any particular rhythm or code which might be suggested."

Professor Barrett reported a very similar case in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 34-5:

"Curious ticking sounds again occurred; these soon de-

[1] *Metapsychical Phenomena*, pp. 81-3.

veloped into louder raps. . . . There was always a remarkable intelligence and often a jocosity about the sounds, and when a tune was played on the piano the raps kept time to it."

But the most remarkable thing about these raps remains to be considered. Not only do the raps indicate that they are governed by some intelligence, but the raps themselves are distinct and personal in character, just as handwriting or the touch of varied individuals on a typewriter or on an electric keyboard, is different. *Each individuality has his own particular kind of rap*, and whenever that individuality manifests, that particular, recognizable rap is given. Thus, Doctor Maxwell states that an individuality calling itself "John" always manifests by short, sharp raps, "like the manipulation of the Morse telegraph;" "a group of four individualities, who call themselves the 'fairies,' manifest their presence by raps resembling high, clear notes" (p. 81). "Another entity personifies a man for whom I had the deepest affection; these raps are graver in character" (p. 82). "Light, precipitated raps, weak but abundant, are the signals of certain personifications which we might call mar-joys, troublesome guests, whose unwelcome intervention spoils the experience" (*op. cit.*).

These statements may be found confirmed in many of the older works on spiritualism and psychic subjects, one of the most remarkable cases being that given in *The Great Amherst Mystery* (pp. 133-4). The author (who, by the way, supplies us with a copy of a sworn affidavit of the truth of his story) writes:

"I wish to state, most emphatically, that I could tell the difference in the knocks made by each ghost (I retain the author's language) just as well as if they had spoken. The knocks made by Maggie were delicate and soft in sound, as if made by a woman's hand, while those made by Bob Nickle were loud and strong, denoting great strength and evidently large hands. When he knocked with those terrible sledge-hammer blows he certainly must have used a large rock or some other heavy object, for such loud knocks were not produced by bare knuckles."

Finally, I may state that the reason why I believe in raps is that I, myself, have obtained them, no other person being present at the time. These rappings have now practically ceased, but for a period of four or five weeks, rappings would begin in my room about the hour of ten o'clock, and continue until I went to sleep, rather increasing in violence at the time I went to bed. The next morning these raps had ceased, and I would not hear one again until about ten or eleven the next night. I could get no intelligence from these raps, it is true, and, for that reason, I long hesitated to attribute them to anything but creaks in the house or in the furniture. They did not sound like creaks, but like loud or soft knocks upon woodwork, and as though made through thick cloth, the noise being muffled in the queer manner that would suggest. I was finally convinced that they were not merely creaks by the following experience. One night, when the raps were louder than usual, and were in fact keeping me awake, I got out of bed and determined to find their origin. After some search, I located them on my mantelpiece, about the centre, slightly to the left. There the raps were taking place, sure enough. I could feel the vibration in the wood, but could see nothing, though the lights were full on. I found the spot exactly, and it was a queer sensation to feel the raps coming under the very spot I was intently watching, my eyes only a few inches from the wood, and yet be unable to perceive anything! The raps, on this occasion, lasted a few minutes, then gradually grew fainter and died away. They did not return again that night.

On other occasions, raps have sounded in various parts of the room, but it is hard to establish the fact that raps of this character are not merely creaks in the house or furniture, and I never paid much attention to them, after I found that no answer was to be obtained to spoken or mental questions. They were very loud, on occasion, and, as before stated, frequently kept me awake for some time at night. They had a nasty habit of commencing just as I was dropping off to sleep, causing me to awake instantly, with a queer, unexplainable feeling of *apprehension*. This was, to

me, one of the most positive evidences that the raps were not normally produced — the effect each rap would have on my nervous system. This was not *fear* merely, for, in the first place, I never felt any feeling akin to fear when the raps were coming; and, in the second place, this feeling would frequently come just *before* the rap would be heard. These raps were distinctively objective, being heard by several persons besides myself, on various occasions. I can produce their corroborative testimony, if desired.

On one occasion, I placed a package of papers fastened together with a rubber band, on the couch. Instantly, there was a loud quick snap, as though the rubber band had been lifted up and allowed to snap back again on to the papers.

On another occasion I was sitting for planchette-writing. I can never obtain writing in this manner, though I have sat by the hour together in an endeavor to procure it. One evening, my eyes being too tired to permit me to work, I got out the planchette, about eleven o'clock, and, placing both hands on it, waited for results. I sat an hour, and nothing had come but a few vague scratches to which I attributed no significance. I sat another half-hour, — still no result. By this time it was growing late, and I was growing impatient. I, however, made up my mind that I would sit there until I obtained writing or until something happened if that had to be till daylight. It grew to be one o'clock, half-past one, two o'clock, — still no writing! It was growing cold, and I was about to give up the experiment in disgust, and turn into bed, when there resounded *on the planchette board itself* a number of quick, faint raps, precisely the same kind of raps, I imagine, as those described on p. 343. For a few moments, and for a few moments only, it seemed to me that I could perfectly *control* these raps, causing them to stop and commence again just as I willed. The period of time that I possessed this apparent power was so short, however, that I may have been mistaken in this, the results being merely coincidences. At all events the raps came clear and distinct, for about a minute, and then suddenly ceased. I

have never tried the experiment again, dreading that long wait, even in the cause of science!

One other fact is worth notice, though it has nothing to do with raps, strictly speaking. During the time that the raps were loudest and most frequent I felt a distinct *presence* in the room, or rather in the hallway. My flat is so arranged that one has to pass the kitchen door in order to reach the front sitting-room. The door leads off to the right, a bedroom leading off to the left. This presence I distinctly felt, standing in the kitchen entrance — so strongly, at times, that I frequently hesitated a moment before walking past the door. This feeling lasted about two weeks, while the raps were at their loudest, and then suddenly disappeared. It has not returned since. As I live alone, I cannot say that this was not purely subjective, since no one else experienced the sensation, except on one occasion. This was under conditions that rendered any suggestion from me out of the question, however, and is well worth recording. A married couple occupy the flat on the same floor as mine. I see very little of them, however, though I am on speaking terms, and had naturally said nothing to them of my ghostly visitors; in fact, I do not think I had seen them at all since the raps commenced.

One Sunday morning, I was sitting at my desk, working, with the hall door open (it being hot), and I getting a better "draught" in that manner. Mr. and Mrs. ——— came out in the hall, he to go "down-town" on some business matter, and she to see him down the stairs. I said "good morning" to both, and, after Mr. ——— had gone, Mrs. ——— stepped just inside my door, to say a few words. As she did so, she suddenly turned sharp round to the right, and exclaimed, "Well, I thought some one was standing there; I felt some one there as plainly as possible." This seemed to me a very interesting confirmation of my own feelings. The raps have now apparently ceased altogether, and I may as well say that I am very well pleased that they have!

What is the cause of these rappings? Well, we do not know! The scientific world does not as yet believe that they exist; and until it has been proved conclusively, and to the satisfaction of all, that such phenomena really do exist, doubtless but small progress will be made. Only when scientific men are assured that the phenomena really do occur will they undertake to examine them; and how they are to become convinced of their occurrence until they become democratic enough to investigate them, is a problem yet to be solved! The scientific world must be assured of the existence of the phenomena before it will condescend to investigate them. The only way to prove their occurrence is to investigate them, and the scientific man will not investigate them until it is proved to him that they exist! How this endless chain is ever to be broken remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, some patient and fearless investigators have blazed the path into the undiscovered country, and have returned, telling us of the road we must follow, and the pitfalls we are to avoid, if we are to reach the same point in our journey safely. Almost the only scientific man who has made a careful study of raps (with the exception, perhaps, of Sir William Crookes) is Doctor Maxwell, and it is to his book that I must accordingly turn for what information we may hope to find, bearing upon this important subject. His instructions to experimenters are as follows:

"Contact of the hands is unnecessary when sitting for raps. I have procured them quite easily with several mediums, without such contact.

"When we have succeeded in obtaining raps with contact, one of the best ways of obtaining them without contact is to let the hands rest for a certain time on the table, then to raise them *very slowly*, palms downward, and the fingers loosely extended. Under such conditions, it seldom happens that raps do not continue to be heard for at least a short time." (This reminds us strongly of table-turning experiments, in which the table continues to move, occasionally, after the sitters' hands have all been removed.)

Doctor Maxwell suggests that the causal agency at work

in all these phenomena is a sort of nervous or vital force, probably closely akin to Crookes's psychic force only, apparently, more closely allied to the living or organic world than Crookes conceived the psychic force to be. But I shall let Doctor Maxwell state his theory in his own words. After finding that "all muscular movements, however slight, are generally followed by a rap" (p. 83), and that the intensity of these raps does not vary either in proportion to the movement made, or to the distance of the rap from the medium, he goes on:

"I have noticed that, with mediums of decided power, it was unnecessary to adopt any special method for the production of raps, as they were forthcoming as soon as any sort of movement with hands or feet was executed. With strong mediums, it often suffices to move the hand above the table, to shake the fingers, to gently press the foot upon the ground, in order to determine the production of a rap. . . . It seems as though the execution of a movement acted in the nature of a determining cause: the accumulated energy then receives a sort of stimulus, the equilibrium is disturbed by the addition of the excess energy unemployed in the movement, and a kind of explosive discharge of neuric force occurs, causing the phenomenon of raps. This is, however, only a working hypothesis. . . . I think there is a close connection between psychical phenomena and the nervous system. What I have just said about the production of raps by the simple contraction of a muscle under a voluntary nervous influx is one of the reasons upon which I base my hypothesis.

"There are others. I have often questioned mediums about their sensations when the raps were being produced. They all acknowledged a feeling of fatigue, of depletion, after a good séance. This feeling is perceptible even to observers themselves" (pp. 84-7).[1]

[1] Doctor Maxwell has elaborated a very ingenious "physio-physiological" theory to account for raps and other physical phenomena, which it would take too long to detail here. See his book, pp. 166-8, 384-5, etc. He conceives that the rap might be considered as "equivalent to the noise of a spark" in an electrical discharge. Feelings of cold, apprehension, etc., are also recorded; and especially of a violent cramp in the stomach. This last is very interesting in view of the fact that the feeling

This statement receives additional confirmation because of certain phenomena that have been observed in the case of Mrs. Piper, many sitters also experiencing this feeling of depression after a sitting; and the more successful the sitting has been, the greater is this subsequent depletion of the vital forces. In Doctor Hodgson's own case, the effects were most marked. Doctor Hodgson was, physically, a most powerful and an exceptionally robust man; but, so great was the vital drain, that he occasionally had to postpone a sitting, because he had not sufficiently recuperated from the effects of the last séance, and it was, in fact, chiefly on this account that séances were held on alternate days, instead of daily, as they were for years. It was not Mrs. Piper's health that was endangered, but Doctor Hodgson's! When considered in connection with the phenomena just quoted, and the statement constantly made relative to the depletion of vital forces in materializing séances, etc., I think that the above acts are of especial interest.

is precisely paralleled in cases of possession, etc., in Oriental countries. The in Lowell's *Occult Japan*, p. 91, we read: "The priest averred that at the moment of possession he always felt a violent punch in his stomach." This confirmation seems to me to be very conclusive, since the sources of the two records are so widely separated.

CHAPTER XX

TELEKINESIS

Though there are many ways in which objects may be moved by fraudulent means, it is very doubtful whether these methods would account for *all* the phenomena witnessed in sporadic cases, of the poltergeist type, *e. g.*, or whether we have to search further for a cause. The most obvious methods by which objects are generally conveyed from one place to another is by carrying them there, and we must be well assured that this has not been possible before we give credence to any force unknown to science. When the objects are actually *seen* to move or to fall from space (apparently) we have several alternatives to choose from: the objects may have been picked up and thrown by the medium or by some other person present, consciously or unconsciously. Or the movement may have been effected by means of a fine thread or hair attached to the object, and pulled by the medium. Or the medium may have moved it by means of the telescopic rod, often spoken of before. Truesdell worked the thread trick to good effect; so did Slade, and so did Doctor Monck, and numbers of other mediums. The scientific presumption, of course, is all against the existence of any such phenomena, and a most suspicious fact, in this connection, is that they are (and apparently always must be) sporadic, and never under the control of the medium. Whenever it has been asserted that these phenomena were controllable, it has been found that there was some error in the experiment which vitiated the result. One of the latest and most instructive of such cases is that afforded by the investigation of " Cheiro's " instrument to measure psychic force. " Cheiro " stated on pp. 158-62 of his *Language of the Hand* that he had invented an instrument which would

register " cerebral vibrations," and that by merely *willing*, the person so trying could move the indicator-needle, and produce material evidence of the reality of thought! An investigation by two S. P. R. members, however, showed that the results were due to other, normal, causes.[1]

After all is said, however, I cannot feel that fraud can account for *all* the phenomena that have been observed in certain sporadic cases, or even in séances. Each person must form his or her own opinion on a subject of this character, of course, and that will be influenced largely by the *amount* of evidence that has been examined by them — dealing directly and indirectly with the subject. After going through all the evidence I could readily lay my hands upon, the distinct impression I received was that certain phenomena of the class known as " telekinetic " do sometimes take place, and that there must be some force in the world as yet unknown, and exercising at least a push-and-pull action (for the evidence for the more complicated phenomena is decidedly weaker, when it ought to be stronger) upon imponderable matter. To my mind, at least, it is by no means hard to conceive the existence of such a force, which, if it were governed by the same laws as all other physical forces, would certainly not run counter to anything science teaches to-day, and the question of its actual existence becomes only a matter of experiment and proof.

Dr. William A. Hammond proved, by a series of experiments, indeed, that certain electrical conditions of the body, *e. g.*, would move objects without any contact on the part of the medium, merely by approximating the hand to that object.[2] But in this case, as in all others, we must set aside *a priori* considerations in discussing this question, which, after all, is merely one of evidence. The question is not whether some such force is rational or conceivable to us, but whether the *facts* in the case compel us to accept some such theory in order to explain them.

[1] *Journal*, Vol. VIII., pp. 249-50.
[2] *Spiritualism and Allied Causes and Conditions of Nervous Derangement*, p. 115, etc.

And here again, the evidence will be valued very differently by various persons reading the reports of the phenomena. But I cannot too strongly point out and insist upon the fact that, in considering the evidence for the supernormal, the mind is more convinced by a great *mass* of evidence than through any single case, no matter how perfect the conditions may appear in that instance. So that, in reading the cases I am about to cite, the reader must bear this fact in mind, and remember that if he wishes to obtain a real idea of the cumulative force of the evidence, he must wade through all that is obtainable and be prepared to feel that the single cases given in this or any other book are insufficient to induce belief, in and of themselves.

The first case I quote from Doctor Maxwell's *Metapsychical Phenomena*, p. 323: "The mantelpiece is covered with plush. On one corner there is a statuette in porcelain resembling the Thorn; the child is seated on a chair, and is pulling a thorn out of his foot; the statuette is five inches high. M. Meurice told me he was going to make this statuette move. I stood near him, with my hand on his back; I stooped down and looked fixedly and narrowly at the statuette during the whole operation. M. Meurice proceeded exactly as in the preceding experiments, and when his hands — joined together at the finger-tips — were at a distance of six inches from the statuette, the latter swayed, bent slowly forward, and fell over. I affirm most positively that there was no hair or thread or normal link of any kind whatsoever between the statuette and the medium's hands. I passed my hand all round the statuette, before the movement, during the movement, and after the movement; I thus verified by touch, what my eyes were witnessing." On the next page is recorded an experiment in which a piece of sealing-wax followed the fingers, in the same manner, and finally fell off on to the floor.

Here, then, we have the record of certain phenomena which are not attributable to any known force or agency, but rather to some force as yet unrecognized by science. If this is a fact, it is a most important fact, and in itself answers

the *Cui Bono ?* of the uninterested. It is true that this force is no proof of spiritism, as such; but that does not matter in the least. The *interpretation* may be what you like, the question for science is: do the phenomena occur at all? They are, at all events, phenomena that are only met with in the investigation of psychical research problems, for without their investigation, this force, if such it be, could never be discovered. Neither Sir William Crookes nor any of the scientific men who investigated these phenomena have been inclined to attribute the power to spirit agency. The question for them was always: Do the phenomena occur? And the answer to this question they realized could only be settled by observation and experiment, and not by *a priori* negation of their possibility!

The experiments of Sir William Crookes are so well known to all that it is not necessary for me to do more than refer to them here. They have been quoted so often before that they must be known, at least in outline, to all students of this subject. The experiments were most carefully conducted and seem to prove pretty conclusively that some force or power was at work, beyond the mere muscles of the medium. Doctor Maxwell has cited a number of very striking cases, in his *Metapsychical Phenomena.* I have quoted one of these above. Several remarkable instances will be found recorded in Jacolliot's *Occult Science in India* (pp. 232, 242, 243, etc.). A large collection of such cases occurring elsewhere than in a séance-room (which are always to be distrusted) will be found in Mr. Myers's two papers, " On Alleged Movements of Objects without Contact, Occurring Not in the Presence of a Paid Medium." [1]

These cases are very remarkable, and lead us naturally into a consideration of the alleged " poltergeist " cases, of which so many have been reported in the history of this subject. The most striking and remarkable case of this kind I know, is " The Great Amherst Mystery," which I have quoted elsewhere. It is one of the most thrilling narratives imaginable, though the author endeavored to keep

[1] *Proceedings,* Vol. VII., pp. 146-98, and pp. 383-94.

strictly to the truth, which is evidenced by the "duly sworn" statement, made before an attorney, "that the book was truth, and contained nothing but the truth," as he, the author, believed it to be. Several accounts of poltergeist cases, in which bells were rung, furniture upset and thrown about, crockery broken, fires lighted, etc., by no apparent cause, will be found in Vols. I. and II. of the *Journal S. P. R.*, the results of the investigations of the Society's members. These are the new and well authenticated cases; numbers of others will be found recorded in Mrs. Crowe's *Night Side of Nature*, Lang's *Dreams and Ghosts*, etc.

Mr. Podmore summarized the evidence for these cases in a very fine article in *Proceedings*, Vol. XII., pp. 45-115.[1] In this paper, Mr. Podmore showed that a very large proportion of the phenomena were the result of trickery, and went on to argue that, this being the case, it was highly probable that they were *all* due to trickery in consequence! I must confess that, while I am heartily in sympathy with Mr. Podmore's general aims and methods in treating the question, his logic does not appeal to me in discussing some of these poltergeist cases. After a careful study of the evidence, the impression left upon the mind is that there is a certain *residuum* of genuine phenomena, mostly telekinetic in character, that have been imitated in certain cases and added to in certain other cases; but the *residuum* is there nevertheless. Of course it is impossible to argue the case unless the evidence is all before one, and has been carefully gone over, but, as stated, the general impression left on the mind (at least on my mind, for one must always speak for oneself in such matters) is that there was a certain amount of evidence for the supernormal, in these phenomena, though that evidence would not be convincing to any one *per se*. If telekinetic phenomena should be proved to exist, in short, these phenomena would weightily support that evidence; but *in themselves* they are not conclusive, as proving the supernormal. The real evidence, therefore, must be obtained

[1] *V.* also his *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. I., pp. 25-43; and his *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 134-62.

from the more directly experimental cases, such as those previously quoted.

In stating that there is a certain amount of evidence for telekinetic and other supernormal phenomena in these cases, I was not only governed by a consideration of the exactness of the observations made, since these were frequently very bad indeed, but by the actual *character* of the phenomena themselves. Just as, in considering the question of "raps," we found that there was a certain weight of evidence in favor of their genuine character, simply because of some peculiarity in the nature of the raps, that would be hard, if not impossible, to duplicate by fraudulent means; so here, there are certain phenomena noticed which, *if they actually occurred*, as stated, would be quite impossible to explain by any process of trickery. One of the most common of these is the fact, often noted, that the objects seen in flight, do not (very often) move as if thrown, but with a *slow*, gliding movement. This has been frequently observed. Mr. Lang, in his criticism of Podmore's *Studies*,[1] pointed this out, and severely criticized Mr. Podmore's method of dealing with these cases. Mr. Podmore replied that he did not consider his theory (that these were hallucinatory in character) as satisfactory either, "but I prefer it, as regards the cases just quoted, to any other hitherto advanced."[2] The controversy between Messrs. Lang and Podmore still continues, but for the present I must leave this branch of the subject and consider several other characteristics of telekinetic and poltergeist phenomena which seem to show that they are, sometimes at least, genuine, and not merely the results of fraud alone.

In the first place, there is (generally) the pathological condition of the medium. In nearly all these cases, we read that the medium was in some sense defective or morbid, either as to the physical or the mental side of his make-up. Still, this characteristic might not, after all, serve as proof of the genuine character of the phenomena, as it might rea-

[1] *Proceedings*, Vol. XIII., pp. 604-9.
[2] *Proceedings*, Vol. XIV., p. 136.

sonably be urged that these characteristics, this abnormal bodily and mental condition, predisposed the medium to produce the phenomena by fraudulent means, consciously or unconsciously, simply because of the morbid state of mind accompanying these conditions. These semi-hysterical states would thus argue, not in favor of the phenomena, but against them. Nevertheless, there are some cases which cannot very well be explained in this way. Take, *e. g.*, the following account of the medium's condition just before the occurrence of a burst of phenomena in the *Amherst Mystery* (pp. 37-8). "After sitting on the edge of the bed for a moment, and gazing about the room with a vacant stare, she started to her feet with a wild yell and said that she felt as if she was about to burst to pieces. . . . While the family stood looking at her, wondering what to do to relieve her, for *her entire body had now swollen*, and she was screaming with pain and grinding her teeth as if in an epileptic fit, a loud report, like one peal of thunder, without that terrible rumbling, was heard in the room. They all, except Esther, who was in bed, started instantly to their feet and stood motionless, literally paralyzed with surprise."

It seems hard to believe that this state was feigned, or was the result of any fraud whatever. Take, again, the following case, in which the distinctive factor is the peculiarity of the phenomena observed. The Rev. R. A. Temple, when visiting the Teed home (where the Amherst phenomena occurred), stated that he saw, among other things, "a bucket of cold water become agitated and, to all appearances, boil, when standing on the kitchen table" (p. 54). This is an almost unique occurrence. Not quite so, however, for I find the same phenomenon recorded on p. 235 of Jacolliot's *Occult Science in India*. We there read: "The fakir stood motionless (with his hands extended over a vase full of cold water). The water began to be gently agitated. It looked as though the surface was ruffled by a slight breeze. Placing my hands on the edge of the vase, I experienced a slight feeling of coolness, which apparently arose from the same cause. . . . Gradually the motion of the waves became more violent.

They made their appearance in every direction, as though the water were in a state of intense ebullition under the influence of a great heat. It soon rose higher than the fakir's hands, and several waves rose to a height of one or two feet from the surface. I asked Covindasamy to take his hands away. Upon their removal, the motion of the water gradually abated, without ceasing altogether, as in the case of boiling water, from which the fire has been removed. On the other hand, whenever he placed his hands in the former position, the motion of the water was as great as ever." This corroborative testimony from two such widely separated sources as India and Nova Scotia seems to me to be most interesting and suggestive.

Again, the character of certain *sounds* heard, would seem to indicate that some sort of hallucination, rather than actual sounds were heard, judging from the description. Thus: "A trumpet was heard in the house all day. The sound came from *within the atmosphere* — I can give no other description of its effect on our sense of hearing." [1] This closely corresponds to the trumpet sounds frequently heard in the séances of W. S. Moses; for we find that, in these séances, very much the same phenomenon was observed. Says Mr. C. T. Speer,[2] ". . . We had a sound of which it is extremely difficult to offer an adequate description. The best idea of it I can give is to ask the reader to imagine the soft tone of a clarionet, gradually increasing in intensity until it rivalled the sound of a trumpet, and then, by degrees, diminishing to the original subdued note of the clarionet, until it eventually died away in a long-drawn-out melancholy wail."

This account would certainly seem to suggest hallucination. We know that these sounds *are* frequently hallucinatory in character, as is evidenced by the phenomena of haunted houses. Frequent illustrative cases could be given. I content myself by quoting one, which has the advantage of being observed by a scientific witness. Miss X. writes:[3]

[1] *The Great Amherst Mystery*, p. 123.
[2] *Spirit Teachings*, p. xv.
[3] *Alleged Haunting of B—— House*, p. 119.

"This morning's phenomenon is the most incomprehensible I have yet known. I heard the banging sounds after we were in bed last night. Early this morning, about 5.30, I was awakened by them. They continued for nearly an hour. Then another sound began *in* the room. It might have been a very little kitten jumping and pouncing, or even a very large bird; there was a fluttering noise, too. It was close, exactly opposite the bed. Miss Moore woke up, and we heard it going on till nearly eight o'clock. . . ." This account would seem to indicate hallucination, at least in part. The theory advanced by the Hon. John Harris to account for the facts, in the face of the evidence, seems to me perfectly absurd.[1]

Finally, there is the evidence afforded by certain impressions and feelings of the medium, experienced when the phenomena are taking place. If the medium is honest, there is no reason to neglect these subjective impressions; in fact, they may prove to be of the very greatest use in ultimately solving these problems. I shall give a few typical examples of the sensations experienced by mediums, when phenomena are occurring, leaving out of account all such dubious statements as those made by professional mediums, etc.

These sensations are noticed by all "dowsers," or, at least, a very large number of them. I have mentioned this phenomenon in the chapter on raps, and so shall not discuss it at any length here. Doctor Maxwell gives several instances in his book. "One of the most intelligent mediums I have come across describes it as a sensation of cramp in the epigastric region; it seems to him, at times, as though he were on the verge of fainting" (p. 119). Then again the "cold breeze," so frequently spoken of in ghost stories, is very often experienced in the séance-room. In the Moses case, these breezes were very numerous. The feeling is recorded several times in *Occult Science in India*. Reichenbach mentions it in his *Researches in Magnetism*, etc., p. 59 (though his results could not, apparently, be duplicated by either the English

[1] *Inferences from Haunted Houses and Haunted Men.* By the Hon. John Harris.

or American S. P. R.).[1] At all events, these phenomena, whether objective or subjective, indicate some abnormal bodily condition, and, because of that fact, point away from fraud, pure and simple, as an explanation for *all* the phenomena recorded at séances. If this is once admitted, then the study of the mental anl physical conditions of the medium at a séance becomes a scientific duty, for there is evidently something here to be investigated. If the scientific world had come forward boldly, years ago, as it should have, we might by now know something of the conditions then manifested, instead of remaining in our present state of ignorance.

And this brings me to a consideration of *how* the phenomena of telekinesis may conceivably be produced — granting that the phenomena are ever genuine at all. To those who are convinced that such phenomena ever *do* occur in ' genuine manner, their explanation becomes both interesting and scientifically important. Tentative theories as to the *modus operandi* involved are advanced in several books that have been published of late years. Let us for a moment consider these.

Looked at from one point of view, indeed, there is nothing so very wonderful in telekinetic phenomena, after all. No *actio in distans* is necessitated or called for, and there is no law of the physical world that would be violated by its acceptance; it is only a question of whether it is a fact or not. It is quite *conceivable*, at least, that the nervous force which actuates the body might, under certain exceptional circumstances, extend beyond the periphery of the bodily frame, and exert an influence over the external, material world. Indeed, as Doctor Maxwell pointed out, " it is not even necessary to suppose that the nervous force acts beyond the limits of the body, if we admit that the experimenters create around them a sort of ' magnetic field.' The nervous force would reach a maximum of potentiality in the experimenters or in the medium; the objects placed within the field would have a different potentiality; according to

[1] See *Proceedings*, Vol. I., pp. 230-7; *American Proceedings*, pp. 116-27.

the conditions, we would have phenomena of attraction or repulsion." Still, it is probable, as Sir Oliver Lodge pointed out,[1] that these phenomena, if proved to be realities, will require an extension of our views of biological, if not physical law. ". . . It is only in the presence of a living being that these actions occur, and the power which enables such movements appears to be a modified or unusual display of vital power, directing energy in an unusual way along unrecognized channels, but otherwise affecting much the same kind of movement as can be caused by the action of ordinary limbs. Thus, instead of action at a distance in the physical sense, what I have observed may be said to be more like *vitality* at a distance, the action of a living organism exerted in unusual directions, and over a range greater than the ordinary." It is, in short, as Mr. Myers suggested,[2] "A mere extension to a short distance from the sensitive's organism, of a small part of his ordinary muscular power."

Still, the phenomenon may not be altogether so simple as might appear from these quotations; the phenomenon may prove to be far more complicated in character, and involve far more of the "unknown" in its explanation than we at present conceive. Let us consider, with Professor Flournoy, the possible nature of telekinetic action. In discussing this, he writes:[3]

"It may be conceived that, as the atom and the molecule are the centre of a more or less radiating influence of extension, so the organized individual, isolated cell, or colony of cells, is originally in possession of a sphere of action, where it concentrates at times its efforts more especially on one point, and again on others *ad libitum*. Through repetition, habit, selection, heredity, and other principles loved by biologists, certain more constant lines of force would be differentiated in this homogeneous primordial sphere, and little by little could give birth to motor organs. For example: our four members of flesh and blood, sweeping the space

[1] *Journal*, Vol. VI., pp. 334-5.
[2] *Human Personality*, Vol. II., p. 208.
[3] *From India to the Planet Mars* (not to be confounded with Gratacap's *Certainty of a Future Life in Mars*, a work of fiction), pp. 377-8.

around us, would be but a more economic expedient invented by nature, a machine wrought in the course of better adapted evolution, to obtain at the least expense the same useful effects as this vague, primordial spherical power. Thus, supplanted or transformed, these powers would thereafter manifest themselves only very exceptionally, in certain states, or with abnormal individuals, as an atavic reapparition of a mode of acting long ago fallen into disuse, because it is really very imperfect and necessitates, without any advantage, an expenditure of vital energy far greater than the ordinary use of arms and limbs. Unless it is the cosmic power itself, the amoral and stupid 'demiurge,' the unconsciousness of M. de Hartman, which comes directly into play upon contact with a deranged nervous system, and realizes its disordered dreams without passing through the regular channels of muscular movements."

In considering the difficult problem of the *intelligence* involved in these phenomena, *i. e.*, its origin and nature, I quote the following passage from Doctor Maxwell's book, which will, I am sure, be found highly interesting and suggestive to my readers. Doctor Maxwell advances the following theory, which is certainly illuminating. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that telekinetic and other kindred phenomena do sometimes occur at séances, he suggests that the intelligence shown at such times is not that of some "spirit," but somehow a "compound of the elementary consciousness of the sitters." He then goes on: "This hypothesis does not appear to me to be demonstrated, but some of my experiments have made me think of its possibility, and I consider it ought to be submitted for examination. Things seem to happen as though the nervous influx of the sitters created a field of force around the experimenters, and more especially the medium. Each experimenter would then act as a dynamogenic element, and would enter, for a variable part, into the production of the liberated energy. This energy would act beyond the apparent limits of the body, under conditions analogous to those governing its intercorporal action; that is to say, it would remain, to a certain extent, in con-

nection with the superior or inferior nervous centres, conscious or unconscious. In this case, we could understand how the energy appears to depend, to a certain extent, upon the will of the sitters or the medium. We can even explain that it should appear to manifest an independent will, if its production were due to the activity of the nervous centres, the action of which is independent of ordinary consciousness. In that hypothesis, none of the sitters would recognize the trace of their normal personality in the evolution of the phenomena; and this is what generally happens. Sometimes, however, the medium or one of the sitters has the feeling, more or less precise, that a phenomenon is about to take place. . . . In this case, the nervous energy, employed to realize the phenomenon, would be in connection with the conscious nervous centres of the medium only, and she would appear to the sitters to be subjected to an extraneous personal will. . . . Such appears to me to be the genesis of the personification, in the greater number of the cases observed by me. There are others, however, where this explanation is less satisfactory." [1]

I conclude this theoretical discussion of the subject by quoting a passage from a report of Sir Oliver Lodge. In discussing telekinetic phenomena, and the fact that frequently associated with the actual movement of an object, there is a "sympathetic" movement on the part of the medium, though this movement has really nothing to do with the actual movement, as can be proved by the senses of touch and sight, he goes on: [2]

"The fact, just recorded, that the medium's body undergoes sympathetic or corresponding movements or twitches is very instructive and interesting. Sometimes, when she (the medium) is going to push a distant object, she will make a little sudden push with her hand in this direction, and immediately afterward the object moves. Once this was done for my edification with constantly the same object, *viz.*, a bureau in a corner of the room. . . . When six or seven feet

[1] *Metapsychical Phenomena*, pp. 166-7.
[2] *Journal, S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., p. 333.

away the time-interval (between the push and the movement of the object) was something like two seconds. When the accordion is being played, the fingers of the medium are moving in a thoroughly appropriate manner, and the process reminds one of the twitching of a dog's legs when he is supposed to be dreaming that he is chasing a hare. It is as if Eusapia were dreaming that she was fingering the instrument, and dreaming it so vividly that the instrument was actually played. It is as if a dog dreamt of the chase with such energy that a distant hare were really captured and killed, as by a phantom dog; and, fanciful as for the moment it may seem, and valueless as I must suppose such speculations are, I am, I confess, at present more than half-disposed to look in some such direction for a clue to these effects. In an idealistic interpretation of nature it has by many philosophers been considered that *thought* is the reality, and that material substratum is but a consequence of thought. So, in a minor degree, it appears here; it is as if, let us say, the dream of the entranced person were vivid enough to physically affect surrounding objects, and actually produce objective results; to cause not only real and permanent movements of ordinary objects, but also temporary fresh aggregations of material particles into extraordinary objects; these aggregations being objective enough to be felt, heard, seen, and probably even photographed, while they last."

With these profoundly interesting remarks, I close this chapter, since I have discussed these theories at greater length than is warranted in a book of this character. Those of my readers who are interested in following up the theoretical and speculative side of the question I would refer to F. W. H. Myers's *Human Personality*, Vol. II., pp. 505-54.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MEDIUMSHIP OF D. D. HOME

1. Miscellaneous Phenomena

It has frequently been said that Home is the only professional medium, in the whole history of spiritualism, who has not, at one time or another, been exposed in fraud. So far as it is known, though Home was under far more careful and prolonged scrutiny than any other medium, fraud was never detected at any of Home's séances, nor was it even suspected on any occasion. Even Mr. Podmore is bound to admit that there is no evidence whatever against this medium on this ground.[1] Home always sat in the circle, side by side with the other sitters, and never made use of a cabinet of any sort. He also had a great objection to darkness, and insisted upon as much light as possible on all occasions. In his *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, Home exposed many of the tricks and frauds which were practised by mediums, and a perusal of that book will convince the reader either that Home craftily kept back a large number of the best secrets, or else that he was unfamiliar with them. The evidence would seem to point to the latter conclusion. Home stated that he did not believe in the passage of matter through matter, a phenomenon that was never noted in his presence,[2] — this reminding us of Stuart Cumberland's statement that he did not believe in thought-transference![3] Home, on one occasion at least, offered to change his clothes just before the séance to show that he had no hidden mechanism in them.[4] This question of Home's character was very

[1] *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., p. 230.
[2] *Lights and Shadows*, p. 416.
[3] *A Thought Reader's Thoughts*, pp. 324-5.
[4] *Dialectical Report*, p. 47.

carefully considered by Mr. Myers, and he took great pains to ascertain in every way possible whether there was any evidence against Home that would throw doubt upon his mediumship. He could find none, after a most thorough search. All the letters that were written to Home by various personages, testifying to the genuine character of the phenomena, and quoted by him in his own books on the subject, were seen in the original by Mr. Myers, and found to be genuine beyond a doubt. So far as he was enabled to ascertain, there was not one iota of evidence against Home's character so far as the records indicated.[1]

On the other hand, the internal evidence of the books and narratives seems to afford good ground for supposing that the phenomena *were* genuine, one reason being the fact that the mediumistic power was developed in childhood, and, being misunderstood by the family, who thought the young medium was playing tricks, caused him to be turned out of the house, to seek his own living. It is hardly likely that, if Home had control over the phenomena, he would voluntarily have carried them to this extent.

However, inasmuch as Home was a professional medium, we must not let these considerations interfere with our judgment of the phenomena, but must weigh the evidence *pro* and *con*, and judge each case on its own merit, treating the case precisely as though we were dealing with a medium who had been detected in fraud. The moral side of the question, in other words, must not be allowed to enter into the question at all, the evidence being judged solely on its face value. Bearing these facts in mind, therefore, we now turn to a brief consideration of the evidence itself.

The experiments of Sir William Crookes with a spring balance are, probably, too well known to the majority of my readers to require any detailed consideration. A board, one end of which rested upon the table, the other end being supported by a spring balance, was in position, and Home placed his hands on the board, at a point just over the table.

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 101-36, 249-52; Vol. VI., pp. 176-9, 302-4, 341-4.

It was easy to calculate just how much pressure would be required at this point, in order to lower the spring balance to a certain extent, and it could be easily seen, also, whether Home was or was not exerting this amount of pressure with his fingers. The movements of the balance clearly showed that the pressure was far greater than Home could have exerted by any normal means, even if he had been allowed free play with his hands, and had not been watched, to see that he did not exert this pressure. These experiments will be found described in full in Crookes's *Researches in Spiritualism*, pp. 34-42. I cannot attempt any detailed consideration of them here. They apparently demonstrate the existence of some force, which was enabled to move objects in some supernormal manner, as in the case of this board, or to produce raps (*v.* p. 356), or to levitate objects in the air, without support, as in the case of the wooden lath, which rose upright of its own accord, and stood upon the table.[1] It is conceivable, of course, that some extension of this same force was that which produced the "levitations" of the medium (*v.* p. 386).

I now turn to consider, briefly, the celebrated "accordion test." It is reported that Home took the accordion by one end — that furthest from the keys — and, holding it in this manner beneath the table, the accordion commenced playing on its own accord, the instrument being *seen* to open and close, and the keys to fall, exactly as if some unseen hand was fingering them. I have described several methods by which this accordion test might be accomplished by fraud, on p. 200, but I may say that a careful study of the evidence in the Home case has convinced me that the accordion could not have been played by any such means in these séances. It must be remembered, in the first place, that these séances were held in the *light*,[2] and the keys were *seen* to be at the end farthest from the medium's hand. Doctor Savage describes a very similar experience of his own in which an accordion played in full light, in a similar manner,[3]

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., p. 123.
[2] *Researches*, pp. 84-5.
[3] *Psychics, Facts and Theories*, p. 104.

and an incident of the same character is mentioned in *Occult Science in India*, p. 248. The difference in the conditions between the Crookes séances and those of Zöllner, *e. g.*, may be readily seen by any one reading the evidence in both cases. One or two quotations from Sir William Crookes's writings will make this clear. After describing the manner in which the accordion was held, etc., and the fact that music was obtained even when all eyes were observing the movements of the instrument, the account goes on:

"But the sequel was still more surprising, for Mr. Home then removed his hand altogether from the accordion, . . . and placed it in the hand of the person next to him. The instrument then continued to play, no person touching it, and no hand being near it. . . . The accordion was now again taken without any visible touch from Mr. Home's hand, which he removed from it entirely and placed upon the table, where it was taken by the person next to him, and seen, as now were both his hands, by all present. I and two of the others present saw the accordion distinctly floating about inside the cage with no visible support. . . . I grasped Mr. Home's arm, below the elbow, and gently slid my hand down until I touched the top of the accordion. He was not moving a muscle. His other hand was on the table, visible to all, and his feet were under the feet of those next to him."[1]

Still more marvellous is the following account, which is the last I quote of the accordion tests. "The accordion was held by Mr. Home in the usual position under the table. Whilst it played Mrs. I. looked beneath and saw it playing. Mr. Home removed his hand altogether from it, and held both hands above the table. During this Mrs. I. said she saw a luminous hand playing the accordion. . . . The accordion, which had been left by Mr. Home under the table, now began to play and move about without any one touching it. It dropped on to my foot, then dragged itself away, playing all the time, and went to Mrs. I. It got on to her knees."[2]

[1] *Researches*, pp. 13-14.
[2] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., p. 118.

The tests conducted by Sir William Crookes were very carefully carried out. Not only was the instrument held by the end opposite the keys beneath the table, as in the Zöllner sittings, but the sitters were frequently allowed to look beneath the table while the playing was in actual progress, and see the instrument opening and closing of its own accord — all this in full light! But, to render the proof still more assured, and at the same time to silence the voices of those who proclaimed that hallucination could account for the phenomena observed (which, on that hypothesis, did not actually occur at all), Mr. Crookes devised a wire cage which would enable the medium to place and hold the accordion in it, but would effectually prevent any contact or communication with the instrument from without.

This cage was made circular in shape, and composed of laths of wood, fastened together at the top and bottom, and wire stretched around it in twenty-four rounds, each being less than an inch from its neighbor; *i. e.* the openings in the cage were less than an inch apart. The height of this cage was such that it could just slip under the dining-table, — which was the one used for the experiment. If now the hand holding the accordion was placed in the cage, no contact with the instrument was possible except from the top. Mr. Crookes provided for this by pushing the cage under the table, so that only a small opening was left through which the medium's wrist was passed between the edge of the cage and the under edge of the table. The hand holding the accordion was thus inside, and cut off from any outside communication whatever. The wires passing around the cage were now charged with electricity from a battery placed in the next room.

Under these conditions the accordion was seen to open and close, and to play tunes of its own accord, Home's hands and feet being observed at the same time. On several occasions, indeed, the medium's hand was removed altogether, and the accordion was seen to be floating about inside the cage, opening and closing by itself, "no person touching it and no

hand being near it." It is hard to see where fraudulent manipulation could be possible, in a case like this.

Now, unless we are prepared to assert that Sir William Crookes and the other sitters present all deliberately falsified, in their narration of the events that took place at these séances, what hypothesis are we to adopt to account for such facts as the foregoing? I have read the criticisms of Mr. Evans [1] and Mr. Podmore,[2] and I can only say that, while I consider this summing up very fine indeed, it is not convincing to me, in that it seems to dwell too much on the suspicious and the insignificant, and omits from consideration much of the strongest evidence, which seems to be hardly a fair way of treating the reports. I have discussed this at some length on p. 337, and omit further consideration of the question here. Nothing has ever been *proved* against Home, that much is certain; and the internal evidence of the sittings (though it will doubtless be estimated variously by various individuals) certainly seems to suggest that fraud alone would by no means account for all the phenomena witnessed at the séances. One can quite appreciate Sir William Crookes's attitude, when, writing in the *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., p. 324, he said:

"For nearly twenty-five years I have been attacked on account of these experiments, and I have not replied. All the attacks I have seen have been criticisms of one or two isolated experiments or statements I made, with an entire avoidance of the passages which would explain the former. They have been written more with the object of showing I was wrong and untrustworthy than with the object of getting at the real truth. . . . When the 'higher criticism' appears, in which *all* I have written on the subject is compared, collated, and reviewed, I have no anxiety as to the result."

2. Levitation

No phenomena that occurred in the presence of Home have attracted more universal attention than these of "levitation."

[1] *Hours with the Ghosts*, pp. 95-104.
[2] *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 143-6, 223-69.

Incredible as it may seem that a human being should be lifted off the ground, and remain in that position for some time, in opposition to the law of gravity, it is, nevertheless, one of the best attested of all the phenomena occurring in Home's presence, the quality and the quantity of the evidence being both good and abundant. How famous the case is may be gauged from the fact that it is mentioned in *Brewer's Dictionary of Miracles*, p. 218. There is little that can be said about these cases of a critical nature, being mostly confined to a discussion of the theory of hallucination in this connection. This I shall discuss on pp. 386-93. I must first of all, however, give a description of a few of these levitations, so that the reader may understand the nature of the problem before him, and appreciate the difficulties of advancing any normal explanation as sufficient to account for the facts observed.

The first account I quote is the famous report of the Master of Lindsay, referred to in other passages throughout this book, in connection with the Home phenomena. It is dated July 14, 1871, and reads as follows:

"I was sitting with Mr. Home and Lord Adare, and a cousin of his. During the sitting, Mr. Home went into a trance, and in that state was carried out of the window in the room next to where we were, and was brought in at our window. The distance between the windows was about seven feet six inches, and there was not the slightest foothold between them, nor was there more than a twelve-inch projection to each window, which served as a ledge to put flowers on.

"We heard the window in the next room lifted up, and almost immediately after we saw Home floating in the air outside our window.

"The moon was shining into the room; my back was to the light, and I saw the shadow on the wall of the window-sill, and Home's feet about six inches above it. He remained in this position for a few seconds, then raised the window and glided into the room, feet foremost, and sat down.

"Lord Adare then went into the next room to look at the window from which he had been carried. It was raised about eighteen inches, and he expressed his wonder how Mr. Home had been taken through so narrow an aperture.

"Home said, still entranced, 'I will show you,' and then, with his back to the window, he leaned back, and was shot out of the aperture, head first, with the body rigid, and then returned quite quietly.

"The window is about seventy feet from the ground.[1] I very much doubt whether any skilful tight-rope dancer would like to attempt a feat of this description, where the only means of crossing would be by a perilous leap, or being borne across in such a manner as I have described, placing the question of the light aside.

"Lindsay."

Lord Adare confirmed the accuracy of this account, and so did the third witness present, Captain Wynne, who wrote a letter to that effect to Home, after the attack by Carpenter, in which he asserted that the "single honest skeptic" present had not seen what the other two affirmed. This method — personal abuse of the witnesses of supernormal events — was very frequently resorted to (and still is, for that matter), and resulted, in this case, in merely strengthening the evidence for the genuineness of the phenomena observed. Besides, there are many other witnesses for this phenomenon of levitation. Mr. Jones, in his evidence before the Dialectical Committee, stated: "I have seen Mr. Home's levitations. I saw him rise and float horizontally across the window. We all saw him clearly. He passed right across just as a person might float upon the water. At my request he was floated back again."[2] But the strongest evidence is, no doubt, that furnished by Sir William Crookes, who writes:[3]

"On one occasion I witnessed a chair, with a lady sitting

[1] Eighty-five feet, according to his statement before the Dialectical Commitee, *v.* p. 214.
[2] *Report*, p. 212.
[3] *Researches*, p. 89.

on it, rise several inches from the ground. On another occasion, to avoid the suspicion of this being in some way performed by herself, the lady knelt on the chair in such manner that its four feet were visible to us. It then rose about three inches, remained suspended for about ten seconds, and then slowly descended. . . . The most striking cases of levitation which I have witnessed have been with Mr. Home. On three separate occasions I have seen him raised completely from the floor of the room. Once sitting in an easy chair, once kneeling on his chair, and once standing up. On each occasion I had full opportunity of watching the occurrence as it was taking place."

On another occasion Sir William wrote: "The best cases of Home's levitation I witnessed were in my own house. On one occasion he went to a clear part of the room, and, after standing quietly for a minute, told us he was rising. I saw him slowly rise up with a continuous gliding movement, and remain about six inches off the ground for several seconds, when he slowly descended. On this occasion no one moved from their places. On another occasion I was invited to come to him, when he rose eighteen inches off the ground, and I passed my hands under his feet, round him, and over his head when he was in the air. On several occasions, Home and the chair on which he was sitting at the table rose off the ground. This was generally done very deliberately, and Home sometimes then tucked up his feet on the seat of the chair and held up his hands in full view of all of us. On such occasions I have gone down and seen and felt all four legs were off the ground at the same time, Home's feet being on the chair. Less frequently the levitating power extended to those next to him. Once my wife was thus raised off the ground in her chair." [1]

Now, what are we to do with such facts as these? They must either have occurred, as stated, or the narrators must have been under some sort of influence, hypnotic or what not, which induced in them the *belief* that the events occurred as stated. It is useless for us to simply deny that the facts

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., p. 341-2.

took place, since that would be childish, no less than unscientific and prejudiced. Here is a great mass of evidence to be accounted for by some means, or we must admit that we cannot account for it at all. It is not that there are so few cases on record that they can be lightly overlooked or passed by as the results of a disordered imagination. Crookes mentions several cases, quite as remarkable as those just given, which I refrain from quoting, from lack of space. The Rev. Minot Savage quotes a remarkable case that happened in his own presence in the case of an American medium.[1] Several cases of levitation will also be found recorded in *Occult Science in India*, pp. 237-8, 257; *Around the World with a Magician and a Juggler*, pp. 55-7; Baldwin's *Secrets of Mahatma Land Explained*, p. 34, and various other works on Eastern travel. As Mr. Lang pointed out, "This phenomenon is constantly reported in the Bible, in the *Lives of the Saints*, by the Bollandists, in the experiences of the early Irvingites, in witch trials, in Iamblichus, and in savage and European folk-lore."[2] Indeed, there is hardly a phenomenon that is so frequently recorded as is this phenomenon of levitation. And, "when we find savage biraarks in Australia, fakirs in India, saints in mediæval Europe, a gentleman's butler in Ireland, boys in Somerset and Midlothian, a young warrior in Zululand, Miss Nancy Wesley at Epworth, in 1716, and Mr. Daniel Home, in London, in 1856-70, all triumphing over the law of gravitation, all floating in the air, how are we to explain the uniformity of stories palpably ridiculous?"[3]

It is folly to say that any process of trickery could be employed that would produce the effects here described. If human testimony is ever to count for anything at all, these facts were established as thoroughly as any facts can well be. There is nothing in these phenomena that suggest or render possible any of the known processes by which this levitation is produced by fraud. There are many of these

[1] *Psychics, Facts, and Theories*, p. 103; *Can Telepathy Explain?* pp. 59-60.
[2] *Historical Mysteries*, p. 177.
[3] *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, pp. 99-100.

methods, some of the devices that are in use on the stage being extremely ingenious, and enabling the performer to pass a solid wooden or iron hoop (which may be examined) over and around the body of the "levitated" assistant, without coming in contact with any support or suggesting any such support as possibly existing; but the conditions under which this act of levitation is performed are very different from those under which Home was levitated, the differences being as great as possible. Nor are the usual methods of fraud possible either, since the light was always sufficient to allow of the medium being distinctly seen, and the sitter being allowed, frequently, to place his hands under and around the medium, as stated in Sir William Crookes's reports. If the séances were in the *dark*, it would be an easy matter to produce the illusion of levitation by fraudulent means alone, a method of doing so being described by Professor Hoffmann in *The Secrets of Stage Conjuring*, pp. 226-8. The account is amusing, and deserves quoting, because little is known to readers uninterested in the literature of sleight-of-hand. It is, in part, as follows:

"A circle of persons is seated in a room in total darkness; they are warned to expect something supernatural. They wait in this unpleasant expectation until they perforce become more or less nervous. They are kept in an attitude of fixed attention, which, long maintained, tends to merge, as the psychological student is well aware, into the hypnotic or morbidly impressionable state. Every creak of a chair, every sound, however minute, may be the outward and visible sign of a message from another world. Under such circumstances, when the musical box spontaneously strikes up, 'Home, Sweet Home,' when the medium remarks, 'I am leaving the floor; don't notice me; talk of something else;' and then a shadowy something, with an unmistakable perfume of leather, passes over the heads of the assembled group, the heel of a boot perhaps resting lightly on the head or shoulder in its passage; who is so skeptical as to doubt that the medium has really been levitated in the manner suggested? Who so skeptical, indeed? Unless in truth he was

aware, or was shrewd enough to suspect, that the medium, under cover of the darkness, had quietly taken off his boots, slipped them upon his hands, and gently moved them backward and forward over the heads of the awe-stricken investigators?

"The process of reasoning is obvious. Here are the medium's boots, floating in the air, on a level with our faces. Where a man's boots are, there his feet must be; and if a man's feet are floating in the air, his whole body must be floating also. *Ergo*, we are henceforth prepared to make affidavit that the medium did, at such and such a time, actually float about such and such a room in our presence."

If the medium has written on the ceiling with a piece of chalk, as a proof that he was really "levitated," this was done by simply inserting a piece of chalk in the end of his telescopic rod, and writing on the ceiling with *that*. The differences between such a séance and the levitations observed in the presence of Home are too obvious to be pointed out in detail.

If, then, we grant, on the strength of the existing evidence, and for the sake of argument, that there *may be* such a thing as genuine levitation; that, at certain times and under certain circumstances, a human body may be levitated in the manner described, and the existing testimony would certainly seem to indicate that this is indeed the case, then it becomes the duty of the scientist to consider this question, and to propose some hypothesis which will explain the facts. Needless to say, such explanations have never been forthcoming, for the reason that the scientific world, as such, does not accept the facts; but, if these are once accepted, or considered possible, even, then their explanation becomes of the greatest importance, no less than of paramount interest.

Let us see if this phenomenon of levitation can be conceived, as a scientific phenomenon. First, it must be remembered that weight, as such, is not an inherent property of matter, as many persons are in the habit of thinking, but varies according to place and environment. A piece of iron,

e. g., will weigh more at the pole than it will at the equator, though the mass of the iron remains unchanged. This is due to the fact that the distance from the earth's centre to the mass of iron is less at the pole than at the equator, owing to the fact that the equatorial diameter is greater than the polar diameter. Consequently, the attractive force is less at the equator than at the poles. Evidently, then, weight is not an essential "property" of matter, but is attached to it in various degrees, according to conditions. When we have thoroughly grasped this, it becomes easier to conceive the possibility of matter becoming imponderable; all that is requisite is that sufficient force should be developed to counterbalance terrestrial attraction.

"It has been observed [1] that bodies which rotate at their axes, like the earth, develop centrifugal force, the effect of which is to decrease their weight; therefore the weight of a body is scientifically said to be the result of the attraction of the earth's centre, *minus* the action exerted by centrifugal force. This force is *nil* at the poles and greatest at the equator. It has been calculated that if the earth turned seventeen times more rapidly than its present rate of rotation, *i. e.*, in one hour and twenty-four minutes, the centrifugal force would be great enough to destroy gravitation, so that a body placed at the equator would cease to have weight. If we apply our knowledge of these mechanical facts to material molecules, which, as we know, are animated by a double movement, of rotation and oscillation, it is possible to imagine, in the case of each molecule, that the movement of the rotation might become so rapid that the centrifugal force developed would annul the force of gravitation, and matter would then be imponderable."

The view I myself should be inclined to favor is that some internal *repulsive* force is generated within the body that is levitated, which is, for the time being, sufficiently strong to counteract the force of gravitation. It is possible that this force is present and active at all times, in living bodies, only it is so slight that it is never noticed under normal con-

[1] *Evidence for a Future Life*, p. 232.

ditions, and only becomes operative under a peculiar *combination* of circumstances, the causes of which we know nothing about as yet. The analogy of electrical experiments might be called into requisition; the pith-ball experiment, *e. g.*, in which the ball is first attracted and then repelled by the excited amber. Again, just as telepathy may be operative at all times, but only merge into a conscious hallucination under some exceptional emotional stress, so may this force be always operative, but only develop to a powerful enough extent to be noticed in the physical world, when coinciding with other forces, or under a peculiar combination of circumstances the nature of which we as yet know nothing about.

Thus it may be that levitation, though it be in opposition to "natural law," in one sense, yet may be in accordance with that law in another; inasmuch as it is within the scope of a larger law, which embraces both. Gravitation is the universal law that holds good in all ordinary events of life, and under all normal physical conditions; it is only when a peculiar combination of circumstances, laws, and forces concentrate at one point, at the same moment, that the law of gravitation is overcome and temporarily transcended. The law of gravitation would be just as universal as ever, and would be in no wise set aside by any "supernatural" occurrence; it would be simply that, owing to this peculiar combination of forces, all acting at the same place, at the same time, the force of gravitation might be, for the time, overcome or transcended, so long as that combination of forces held together and existed. The event would thus still be enabled to take place, but it would not be in opposition to the law of gravitation; it might almost be said that it is in accordance with it.

In somewhat the same way, I think it is quite possible to imagine various "miracles" taking place, events which appear to be in direct opposition to the laws of nature. Under the usual circumstances and conditions, when the counteracting laws and forces are scattered, so to speak, and acting separately instead of together, then the supposed law holds

good; but when, owing to some chance circumstances, or the operation of the divine will (whichever we choose to believe), these laws and forces are centred and concentrated upon one point, at the same instant, then they will cumulatively overcome the force that counteracts them, and a "miracle" will have been accomplished. This I put forward by way of suggestion only.

To one final reflection I would draw the reader's attention before leaving this theoretical portion of the discussion. It is that the power or force operative in the production of levitation may be only an *extension* of the same force which is frequently observed in the production of movements of bodies under somewhat the same combination of circumstances which rendered levitation possible; those which exist at the séance. It may be that the same nerve force which, in parakinetic phenomena, moves objects to a greater degree than can be accounted for by the movements of the muscles of the medium; which, in telekinetic phenomena, moves objects at a distance without contact at all; may, under some circumstances, levitate a body from the ground altogether, instead of merely dragging it along the floor or table, etc., as the case may be. That this is conceivable is certain, and that it has a certain amount of evidence in its support is established by the fact that the parakinetic phenomena are, apparently, easier to obtain than the telekinetic phenomena; and it is highly probable, to judge from the disparity in the amount of the evidence, that the telekinetic phenomena are more readily obtained than the phenomena of levitation. So much for the purely theoretical side of the question, and taking for granted, all this while, that the phenomena are genuine and real "phenomena," and not the result of some hallucination.

Mr. Podmore and others, in discussing these occurrences, incline to the belief that they did not really occur, as stated, at all, but that they were the result of some species of hallucination; that the ultimate explanation is to be found in the psychological rather than in the physical world; in Mr. Podmore's words: ". . . the witnesses were to some extent

hallucinated. It is not necessary to suppose in such a case a 'pure' hallucination, containing no elements derived from actual sensation, if, indeed, a 'pure' hallucination, in this sense, ever occurs. It may be conjectured that Home probably supplied certain material data, and guided the imagination of the percipients to complete the picture which he suggested to them." [1]

Mr. Podmore returns to this suggestion, and defends his thesis at great length in his *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 244-69, in the chapter, "Was There Hallucination?" His arguments are in many ways strong, though, to my mind, not convincing. Mr. Podmore's arguments receive a certain amount of support from the evidences of hallucination in certain "poltergeist cases" (in the *Amherst Mystery, e. g.*, voices — evidently of a hallucinatory character — are heard in various parts of the house, p. 135); from the fact that, in haunted houses, there are abundant evidences of hallucinations, apart from the figures observed, *e. g.*, when the door apparently opens, to admit the apparition seen,[2] or where the investigator is apparently pushed by some unseen hand;[3] in various spiritualistic séances, where the internal evidence points clearly to the fact that there has been hallucination at work, *e. g.*, when the painter Tissot saw two figures, as well as the double of the medium, Eglinton, at a séance,[4] or when buzzing voices are heard and flashes of light, evidently subjective, were seen;[5] in such cases as that reported by Prof. Harlow Gale,[6] or when only one out of nine persons saw the phenomenon, as at one of Home's séances;[7] — all these and similar cases might be quoted as instances of hallucinations that have occurred at séances or under some such conditions as are present at a spiritualistic séance. An appeal might be made to the per-

[1] *Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 121.
[2] Lee, *Examples of the Supernatural*, p. 26.
[3] *The Alleged Haunting of B—— House*, p. 117.
[4] *Evidence for a Future Life*, p. 239.
[5] *Occult Science in India*, pp. 257, 268.
[6] "A Study in Spiritistic Hallucinations," *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XV., pp. 65-89.
[7] *Dialectical Report*, p. 210.

formances of the Hindu fakirs, whose feats are apparently dependent upon hypnotic influence or some form of suggested hallucinations, in order to accomplish the result. These analogies, and the support that such cases lend to the theory advanced, have been pointed out and insisted upon by Mr. Podmore, in his *Apparitions and Thought Transference*, pp. 377-80, as well as in his *Modern Spiritualism*, mentioned above. The theory was advanced and strongly defended by Professor Barrett, in an address before the British Association, in a paper read at the Glasgow meeting, September, 1876. The vital parts of this paper, in so far as they relate to the aspect of the problem here under discussion, will be found reprinted in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. I., pp. 238-44.

So far we have been considering the evidence in favor of the hypothesis of hallucination, but there is much to be said against such a theory — so much, perhaps, as to render that hypothesis altogether untenable. We may agree with Mr. Lang[1] that the same psychological conditions produced alike the old and the new stories; that explains nothing and merely pushes us back to the primary question: why do these psychological conditions arise? That question Mr. Lang is unable to answer, and it would appear from his later writings that Mr. Lang has entirely discarded the hallucination theory, as, in his *Historical Mysteries* (pp. 185-7), he ridicules the theory unmercifully, and tears the whole construction down about the heads of its psychological architects! It seems impossible to conceive that a whole company of persons should be hypnotized or hallucinated at the same instant, and made to see things that did not really happen; or to imagine that they went over to the medium's chair and placed their hands under the four legs, and around and about the medium, as Sir William Crookes asserted that he did, and that the other members of the circle merely imagined that he, the investigator, was doing so, whereas there was no basis of truth for any of these assertions! Various persons will, of course, sum up the value of the evidence differently, according to their outlook upon the world, and

[1] *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, p. 126.

these phenomena in particular; but I myself cannot conceive such a phenomenon taking place. We have no evidence whatever for any similar conditions or cases in the records of collective hallucinations or haunted houses, nor have we any in the history of hypnotism. Imposed hypnotic hallucinations are far more restricted in their scope than these, and they cannot be imposed, moreover, until the subject has first been hypnotized, and then only the subject so hypnotized sees the suggested hallucination, and not the surrounding onlookers or spectators. There is no known psychological parallel to which the advocates of the hallucination theory may appeal, except to the cases before mentioned, of the fakirs of India, where a crowd of spectators is apparently hallucinated, and see phenomena that do not in reality exist. If this evidence fails to give the necessary support, then the defenders of this theory will be indeed hard put to it to defend it. Let us, therefore, consider this question of Indian magic in relation to the theory of hallucination in some detail, and see how far the evidence supports the theory of hallucination in the case of D. D. Home.

It would be a most interesting and pleasurable task to consider this question of Indian magic in detail, but my space forbids. Typical accounts of the phenomena observed will be found recorded in many works of Eastern travel, and they are dealt with more or less from the psychical researcher's standpoint in such books as *Occult Science in India*, *Occult Japan*, Howitt's *History of the Supernatural* (2 vols.), *Psychic Notes* (published in Calcutta, for a time), Baldwin's *Secrets of Mahatma Land Explained*, *Around the World with a Magician and a Juggler*, Kellar's *Up and Down and Roundabout the World*, etc. These last three books deal very largely with the fraudulent side of the question and contain some exposés of the methods employed by Indian conjurers. Although all these books (the last three) were written by professional conjurors, they all contain the statement that certain phenomena were witnessed which the authors could not explain, and, so far as they could see, were not due to any process of trickery. Mr. Kellar espe-

cially stated this in an article published in *The North American Review*, for January, 1893. Doctor Hodgson, with his wonderful acumen and ability to detect fraud and misstatement, severely criticized this article. His paper on "Indian Magic and the Testimony of Conjurers"[1] should be read by every one who is making a study of Eastern magic, or who is inclined to place too much faith in the testimony of conjurers that "such and such a phenomenon is not produced by fraudulent means."

In this article Doctor Hodgson explains the mango tree trick, the colored sands trick, the snake charming trick, the basket trick, the bowl of water trick, the dry sand trick, and others which are the principal ones performed by every Indian fakir. (A detailed explanation of these tricks will also be found in *Mahatma*, Vol. III., Nos. 7 and 8, January and February, 1900.) These "phenomena" are all shown to be no more than clever tricks, and any one who claims that they afford any evidence for the supernormal simply shows that he is unacquainted with the methods employed to produce them.

But the most interesting part of Doctor Hodgson's paper is his consideration of the alleged feats of levitation and the famous rope-climbing exploit, both of which are probably too well known to my readers to need describing here. The nature of the former of these phenomena is explained by its title; the second is the famous feat in which a rope is thrown into the air by the performer, where it stays — suspended by some unknown power — and gradually stiffens, allowing a small boy, the fakir's assistant, to climb up it, and finally to disappear in the clouds! Soon, the legs and arms of the boy are seen to fall to the ground, then the head, and finally the trunk falls to earth, all before the astonished and horrified gaze of the onlookers. These pieces gradually join themselves together, and re-form the boy's body, whole as it was at first, and the boy goes on his way rejoicing!

Of the levitation, I shall not speak now, beyond stating that it is recorded in several of the books mentioned, as previously stated. The value of the testimony will be vari-

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., pp. 354-66.

ously estimated by individuals, partly according to their preconceived ideas of the limits of the possible, and partly according to their familiarity with the evidence that has been collected in various works on the subject. As I have considered this subject of levitation elsewhere I shall dismiss it for the time being, and turn to the feat that most particularly interests us in relation to this question of hallucination and its possibilities.

It need hardly be pointed out, I imagine, that, if this feat was ever witnessed by Europeans at all (*i. e.*, if the whole thing is not a myth) and certain individuals imagined they actually witnessed it, the effect was the result of an hallucination, and not the result of seeing what actually took place. It need scarcely be said that the nature of the trick, if trick it is (the suspension of the rope by some unknown power; the ascent of the boy into the clouds; the tumbling down to earth of the separate members; and, finally, the joining together of these into a live form again) would forbid any such performance taking place in reality — except on a stage, *e. g.*, when appropriate apparatus can be arranged to perform this feat, an illusion of this sort being mentioned in *Mahatma*, Vol. III., No. 5, November, 1899. If such a performance was ever witnessed, therefore, it must have been the result of some sort of hallucination, possibly hypnotic, which the onlooker was experiencing at the time. The question, therefore, narrows itself down to this: was the onlooker hallucinated?

Several reported instances seemed to show conclusively that such was the case, it being stated that (particularly in one case which the writer quoted from his own experience) the photographic plate of a camera revealed that nothing of the sort had transpired. The person witnessing the performance had actually seen it, as described, while the photographic plate, which cannot be hypnotized and so share in the hallucination supposedly induced, showed that the performance had not taken place at all. Such was the story, at least, which reached a very large portion of the reading public — so large, indeed, that this is the explanation that is

given of this illusion whenever it is mentioned, as if it were a fact, past all questioning!

Doctor Hodgson, in criticizing these articles, pointed out that the illustrations reproduced to back up the story (supposedly photographs) were, in reality, *woodcuts*, and consequently were not what they purported to be at all, and served to throw a grave suspicion on the story *in toto*. Later, it came to light that this story was concocted by its author, and had no basis in fact whatever.[1] Doctor Hodgson actually doubted if the phenomenon had ever been witnessed at all, or even if any person *thought* he had witnessed it, rather inclining to the belief that these stories were invariably made up "out of whole cloth," and had no real basis in fact — even that the sitters were hallucinated, as it is stated they were. Several cases have lately come to light, however, particularly a recent and well-recorded one,[2] which would seem to show that the stories have at least *some* basis of truth. I shall accordingly consider the cases as if they actually existed, merely pointing out that such performances are extremely rare, even if they exist at all. Doctor Hodgson never witnessed the illusion, nor could he find any one who had a first-hand account to offer him; "even Colonel Olcott," says Doctor Hodgson, "a faithful servant of Mme. Blavatsky, . . . told me, after several years' residence in India, he had never witnessed the rope-tying performance."[3] At the same time Doctor Hodgson was willing to admit that the story may have originated because of some hypnotically induced hallucination, akin to those induced by our Western hypnotists. The evidence, as it stands, is certainly inconclusive, in any case, and though there is a certain analogy between these performances and those of D. D. Home, *e. g.*, the inaccuracy in recording, the doubt surrounding these phenomena can be said to offer no direct support to the theory of hallucination in Home's case, which must stand or fall on its own merits. It can derive no real

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. V., pp. 847-86, 195.
[2] *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. XII., pp. 30-1.
[3] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., p. 363.

support from the performances of Oriental conjurers. On the subject of Oriental magic generally I cannot do better than to conclude this summary in the words of Doctor Hodgson, to be found in the article so frequently referred to already. In summing up the evidence for the supernormal in these performances, he says:

"I conclude, therefore, that, in spite of the strong assertions of a distinguished conjurer, we have before us no real evidence to the manifestation by Indian jugglers or fakirs of any marvels beyond the power of trickery to produce. . . . The conjurer's mere assertion that certain marvels are *not* explicable by trickery is worth *just as much* as the *savant's* mere assertion that they *must be* so explicable, — just as much, and no more.

"There is no royal road to sound opinions on such matters generally; there is nothing for it save to examine each narrative on its own merits, and with close individual care, the mind meanwhile prepared for either fate, whether to prick some bubble of pretension into empty falsity, or to discover beneath some unpromising envelope a germ of inexplicable truth." [1]

We find, therefore, that this testimony in no wise lends support to the theory of hallucination in the Home case, but rather shows us how impossible such a theory is. And, if the evidence cannot be strengthened in this direction, it cannot find support in any other; for, as we have seen, no other known facts are in any way similar to the phenomena observed in Home's presence. I do not urge that the phenomena are numerous enough or the reports conclusive enough to warrant our accepting levitation as a fact in nature, but we should certainly discourage any attempts to assert that hallucination is enough to account for all that was witnessed at Home's séances. What the real explanation may be I do not pretend to know; I am only arguing here against the tendency to explain, in too offhand a manner, phenomena which have every appearance of being both real and objective.

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., p. 365-6.

§ 3. *Elongation*

Another of the marvellous feats witnessed in Home's presence was that of "elongation," in which the medium's body was, apparently, lengthened or drawn out a number of inches, and quite beyond the limits of any normal extension possible. This is one of the best attested, and at the same time one of the most incredible phenomena witnessed in this medium's presence, varied as those phenomena were. One or two typical reports of this phenomenon are as follows:

"Mr. H. D. Jencken, of Norwood, England, communicates, under the date of December, 1867, his experiences at four séances, at which the body of D. D. Home was elongated; and on all these occasions, Mr. J. used his utmost endeavor to make certain of the fact. On two of them, he had the amplest opportunity of examining Mr. Home, and measured the actual elongation and shortening. At one, the extension appeared to take place at the waist, and the clothing separated eight or ten inches. Mr. J., who is six feet, hardly reached up to Home's shoulder. Walking to and fro, Home especially called attention to the fact of his feet being firmly planted on the ground. 'He then grew shorter,' says Mr. J., 'until he only reached my shoulder, his waistcoat overlapping at his hip. . . . Encouraging every mode of testing the truth of this marvellous phenomenon, Mr. Home made me hold his feet, whilst the Hon. Mr. ——— placed his hands on his head and shoulders. The elongation was repeated three times. Twice, whilst he was standing, the extension, measured on the wall by the Hon. Mr. ———, showed eight inches; the extension at the waist, as measured by Mr. ———, was six inches; and the third time the elongation occurred, Mr. Home was seated next to Mrs. ———, who placed her hand on his head, and her feet on his feet, had the utmost difficulty in keeping her position, as Mr. Home's body grew higher and higher; the extreme extension reached being six inches.'" [1]

Very much the same description of the phenomenon was

[1] *Planchette*, by Epes Sargent, p. 100-1.

given by the Master of Lindsay (the Earl of Crawford), as follows:

". . . I saw Mr. Home, in a trance, elongated eleven inches. I measured him standing up against the wall, and marked the place; not being satisfied with that, I put him in the middle of the room, and placed a candle in front of him, so as to throw a shadow on the wall, which I also marked. When he awoke I measured him again in his natural size, both directly and by the shadow, and the results were equal. I can swear that he was not off the ground or standing on tiptoe, as I had full view of his feet, and moreover, a gentleman present had one of his feet placed over Home's insteps, one hand on his shoulder, and the other on his side where the false ribs come near the hip-bone. . . . The top of the hip-bone and the short ribs separate. In Home, they are usually close together. There was no separation of the vertebræ of the spine; nor were the elongations at all like those resulting from expanding the chest with air; the shoulders did not move. Home looked as if he was pulled up by the neck; the muscles seemed in a state of tension. He stood firmly in the middle of the room, and, before the elongation commenced, I placed my foot on his instep. I will swear he never moved his heels from the ground." [1]

It is true that there are several minor defects in the records, as given above, which detract from the strength of the evidence. Thus, it is hard to see how the Earl of Crawford had a "full view" of the medium's feet, when we learn that they were covered by the feet of another sitter; nothing is said as to the amount of light admitted at these séances, and it is very suspicious that the vertebræ did not separate, when the length of the elongation would seem to call for such separation, if genuine. However, the defects in the report seem to me to be such as would be made by any person drawing up a report of unusual occurrences; minor inaccuracies exist, but the central facts seem to have been carefully noted, and rather more than the usual care exercised

[1] *Dialectical Report*, pp. 207-8, 213-4.

against fraud. It is hard to consider seriously this phenomenon as genuine; but, on the other hand, if we are to keep an open mind, what *right* have we to dismiss the phenomenon as impossible or inconceivable, merely because it is not understandable? If we had been at the séance in question, it is possible that our belief would be as strong as those who recorded the phenomena; for the present, it would seem best to hold our judgment in suspense, awaiting further evidence.

A case of apparent elongation occurred in 1900; it was investigated by Mr. Podmore, and a report of the case printed in *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. X., pp. 104-9. In this case the medium, Mr. Alfred Peters, stood in the corner of the room, which was poorly lighted, and, after being "controlled," began swaying backward and forward. Two sitters stationed themselves one on either side of the medium, placed their feet on his feet, and one hand on his hip (the one nearest to them), the other hands grasping those of the medium. Under these conditions, the medium was elongated. "Both my brother and I looked to see that we were still on his feet, and that our hands were on his waist; we were both conscious that the hands we had placed on the waist were being carried up as the elongation gradually took place. Keeping our eyes upon him we found that we had to stretch our arms to their fullest extent (without rising from our seats) to retain their position on the waist. On my attempting to arise from my chair, the 'Indian' requested me to remain seated. At last a point was reached when I called to my brother, 'If he goes any higher I can't reach,' my arm being stretched to its very fullest extent; at the same time I was conscious, and so was my brother, that our feet were still on the medium's feet. The 'red Indian' (who was controlling) called to us then to observe his hands, one arm (the hand and fingers being open and extended) being quite six inches longer than the other; from our position, this was difficult for my brother and me to see, but was quite apparent to Mrs. S. . . . Again our attention was directed to the fact that the shorter arm had been lengthened to match the

other. We had now arrived at the limit of our powers of extension, and, with a warning from the 'Indian,' the medium collapsed on to the floor."

When this case appeared (which is at least interesting, if only to show that phenomena of the kind still occur), I sent in a criticism of the case, suggesting three possible methods of trickery by which the phenomenon might have been accomplished.[1] I then said:

"(1) We are told . . . that he 'appeared to be drawn upward by his hands,' which were 'stretched straight out above his head.' Now are we sure that his hands could reach nothing sufficiently substantial to enable him to raise his body in this way? Of this we are told nothing definite. The ceiling of the 'bow window' was lower by six inches than that of the remainder of the room; and there were curtains separating them. On what were the curtains hung? On a rod, as is usually the case? And if so, would this rod be sufficiently substantial to sustain the medium's weight, assisted, perhaps, by one or both feet? As for the hands seen against the ceiling, they may have been the medium's shown *alternately*, he, meanwhile, supporting himself with the other hand. The objection to this hypothesis is that the medium's feet were held, and on this basis they would necessarily have to be free. When we read that the medium's 'feet' were held, we must presume, in this case at least, that it was his *shoes* that were so held, and very insecurely at that. I would suggest, therefore, either that the medium slipped out of his shoes and left them under the careful supervision of their guardians while he 'elongated' himself, as above described; or that dummy feet were substituted, whilst his own followed the rest of his body, as they would under ordinary circumstances.

"(2) My second hypothesis is that dummy feet were substituted, or his shoes left under observation, as above described, and that the medium mounted in some way by means of his stocking feet. This would cause his body to be elevated from the floor to the extent described and enable

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. X., pp. 238-40.

his arms to be seen against the ceiling, as they would really be at that height from the ground floor. The question is, on what did the medium find a foothold? We read (p. 108), 'the only chair near (D) I pushed away when the medium began to sway backward and forward, fearing he would knock himself against it.' On the other hand, the chairs A and B were not moved during the whole phenomenon — 'we none of us moved from our chairs during the whole time.'" (These chairs were those on either side of the medium, and I advanced the theory that the medium was enabled to place his feet on the rungs of the chairs). . . . "It must be remembered that the attention of the investigators seems to have been almost entirely concentrated on the medium's arms and upper portion of his body; he, no doubt, attracting attention thereto. . . . From their strained position, observation must have been next to impossible.

"(3) My third hypothesis I admit to be exceedingly improbable, but it is, to my mind, more conceivable than a genuine manifestation of the phenomenon of elongation. It is that the medium employed dummy arms to display against the background of the ceiling, and that some sliding mechanism was attached to his body, which, being elevated, would carry the investigator's hands along with it (his feet remaining on the floor), and thus give the sensation of moving the whole upper part of the medium's body. It will be observed that only the medium's hands and arms were actually *seen* to be at an unusual distance from the floor; nothing is said of the body being seen in its elevated position, it being merely *inferred* from the sense of touch."

I think that Mr. Podmore's suggestion is more probable than any of my own, however, it being that "the elongation was effected by some simple mechanism, such as steel stilts, concealed in his boots and trousers." [1]

The evidence for this case, however, is distinctly inferior to that in the case of Home, both with regard to quality and quantity. It is hard to see how Home could have produced his own cases of elongation by trickery; the nearest

[1] *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., pp. 261-2.

attempt to an explanation that has been offered is that by Mr. Podmore, in a passage following that just quoted. He there says: "That Home used any such concealed apparatus of the kind (just described) is, I think, improbable. The evidence in his case, either from want of detail, length of time between event and record, or the attendant circumstances, such as feebleness of illumination, is so defective that it is easier to attribute the results recorded to illusion, which Home may no doubt have eked out on occasion by such devices as slipping his feet half out of his boots, and standing on tiptoe, or supporting himself on some convenient articles of furniture" (p. 262).

The question of Home's elongation is likely to go unsolved until another medium shall arise who can duplicate the phenomena under the same conditions. If such a medium ever comes to light, it will be time to consider, seriously, this phenomenon of elongation.

§ 4. *The "Fire Tests"*

We now turn to consider another phase of the mediumship exhibited through Home, and in some ways the most remarkable, in others the most suspicious, of them all. I refer to the so-called "fire tests;" to those cases, *i. e.*, where it is reported that the medium is enabled to take from the fire, and handle with impunity, live coals; to handle heated lamp-chimneys without harm; to pass handkerchiefs through the flame of a candle without in any way injuring the fabric; all such feats as these may be classed under our general heading of "fire tests," whether they ultimately prove to be fraudulent or genuine in character.

I shall begin by quoting some of the reports of these occurrences, written by different witnesses, reserving the critical considerations until later on. The first report of the kind is that of the Master of Lindsay (the Earl of Crawford), and is printed in the *Report of the Dialectical Society*, pp. 208-9. It reads, in part:

"I have frequently seen Home, when in a trance, go to

the fire and take out large red-hot coals, and carry them about in his hands, put them inside his shirt, etc. Eight times, I have myself held a red-hot coal in my hands without injury, when it scorched my face on raising my hand. Once, I wished to see if they really would burn, and I said so, and touched the coal with the middle finger of my right hand, and I got a blister as large as a sixpence; I instantly asked him to give me the coal, and I held the part that burnt me in the middle of my hand, for three or four minutes, without the least inconvenience.

"A few weeks ago, I was at a séance with eight others. Of these, seven held a red-hot coal without pain, and the two others could not bear the approach of it; of the seven, four were ladies." Miss Douglas, one of the witnesses, in answer to questions, stated that "Mr. Home held the hot coals a long time in his hand, till they were nearly black. He then placed them between his shirt and coat, and they did not singe either."

The other accounts I shall quote are from the records of Sir William Crookes. One very notable séance took place on the 9th of May, 1871. The room was lighted by a wood fire as well as four candles, placed in various parts of the room. Two of these candles were extinguished, leaving the room still lighted by two and the wood fire. Home then borrowed a cambric handkerchief, which he folded and placed upon the open palm of his hand. On this he now placed a piece of red-hot charcoal, which he had just extracted from the fire, and fanned this charcoal with his breath, until it became white hot. The handkerchief was afterward found intact, all but a small hole, which had been burnt in it. Sir William Crookes took the handkerchief with him into the laboratory, and an analysis found that it was in every way unprepared, chemically or otherwise.

The last account I quote *verbatim*. "Mr. Home again went to the fire, and after stirring the hot coals about with his hand, took out a red-hot piece nearly as big as an orange, and putting it on his right hand, covered it over with his left hand, so as to almost completely enclose it, and then

blew into the small furnace thus extemporized until the lump of charcoal was nearly white-hot, and then drew my attention to the lambent flame which was flickering over the coal and licking round his fingers; he fell on his knees, looked up in a reverent manner, held up the coal in front, and said, 'Is not God good? Are not his laws wonderful?'"[1]

Now, all this is very wonderful indeed. D. D. Home was not alone in producing these phenomena; they were observed in the presence of other mediums besides Home, but never under such good "test conditions." It is impossible to read the accounts without being impressed with the remarkable character of the evidence, the quality and quantity of which, in Home's case, could hardly be improved upon. It is impossible, it seems to me, to dismiss this evidence on the ground that it is mere fraud and nothing else. It is possible that the handkerchief in question might have been substituted for another that was in some way prepared to withstand the fire, after one of the methods to be mentioned shortly. But we must bear in mind that Home also took these coals into his open hands, and kept them there some considerable time, blowing on the coals, rendering them white-hot, and allowing the flames to lick round his fingers. In order to explain these facts, we should have to assume either that Home had some chemical substance on his hands, which rendered them impervious to the influence of the heat; or that Home had some "non-conducting substance" in his hands which protected them from the live coals.[2] Sir William Crookes states there is no known substance that will protect the hands against such heat as that which must be assumed in these cases, while Mr. Lang laughs at Mr. Podmore's "non-conducting substance." Mr. Podmore himself suggested asbestos cloth, as being the "substance" in question. It is conceivable that this might have been employed, though highly improbable, one would think, because so easy to detect. Even were we to grant the use of this substance, still, how are we to account for the handkerchief test, on this

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. VI., p. 103.
[2] *Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 121.

principle, and, above all, how are we to account for those cases in which the sitter himself took the red-hot coal into his own hands, holding it there for some minutes? Either these phenomena require some explanation other than fraud, or the accounts are inaccurate to a degree one would be quite unwarranted in assuming them to be. For many reasons, I, at least, cannot believe this to be the case, and I consequently prefer to hold my judgment in suspense, so far as these phenomena go, and to offer no theory.

It is true that certain explanations of these phenomena have been offered from time to time, in various books on magic and kindred subjects. As the reader may be inclined to form an opinion of these phenomena different from my own, and incline to the hypothesis that all these tests are fraud, and nothing but fraud, if only the right explanation of the phenomena were forthcoming, I herewith break off to describe the principal devices that are used by mediums in imitating these phenomena, since I do not deny that the vast majority of the phenomena witnessed are produced by fraudulent means.

There are preparations that may be applied to the hands that will protect them from great heat for a considerable time. One of these preparations is the following, which I give on the authority of the author of *The Revelations of a Spirit Medium.* "Dissolve one-half ounce of camphor in two ounces of aqua vitæ; add one ounce of quicksilver, and one ounce of liquid styrax, which is the product of the myrrh, and which prevents the camphor from igniting. Shake and mix well together. Bathe the inside of the hand and the fingers in this preparation, allowing it to dry in, and you can duplicate the performance with the lamp-chimney, and hold your fingers in the blaze quite a while without any bad effects" (p. 98).

If it is desired to hold a handkerchief over a flame, without burning it, or to pass the hair through the fire without singeing it, all that the medium has to do is to soak the hair or the handkerchief in a solution made in the following manner. Fill a teacup with water, and in this dissolve all

the salt the water will contain. In another cup, dissolve a tablespoonful of soda in warm water. Now pour the two solutions together, and mix them thoroughly. When this is done, the hair, handkerchief, or whatever article it is proposed to pass through the flame, is soaked in this mixture. Allow each article to thoroughly dry. They may now be passed through the fire uninjured.

It is said that articles soaked in alum water are fireproof, to a certain extent. It has also been asserted that, by rubbing the soles of the feet with a preparation of salt water and powdered red stone (the proportion being two ounces of red stone to a cupful of brine) several steps may be taken over red-hot iron, without injury, a fact that is interesting in connection with the fire-walking phenomena, to be mentioned presently.

Although the above methods of trickery might explain such phenomena as the "handkerchief test," therefore, and such minor tests as the handling of heated lamp-chimneys, coals that are only partially heated, etc., it would not explain, to my mind, the more extraordinary phenomena of the handling of red-hot coals in any such manner as Home was in the habit of handling them; and certainly would not explain the fact of how it came about that the sitters themselves were, at times, enabled to handle the coals. It may be true, as Mr. Podmore asserted was the case, that a coal which is white-hot at one end may not be too hot at the other to handle with the bare hands, which would seem to be corroborated by "Uncle Remus's" statement that the negroes sometimes "take up live pieces of coal to light their pipes withal;" still the facts are not explained by any of these tentative theories, none of the explanations sufficing to explain the facts, providing the records are accurate. The only other explanation that I have been able to find is the following, which I quote from Henry R. Evans's *Hours with the Ghosts*, pp. 106-7.[1]

"Home's extraordinary feat of alternately cooling and heating a lump of coal taken from a blazing fire, as related

[1] This book now bears the title "*The Spirit World Unmasked.*"

by Mr. H. D. Jencken and others, is easily explained. It is a juggling trick. The coal is a piece of spongy platinum which bears a close resemblance to a lump of half-burnt coal, and is palmed in the hand, as a prestidigitateur conceals a coin, a pack of cards, an egg, or a small lemon. The medium or magician advances to the grate and pretends to take a genuine lump of coal from the fire, but brings up instead, at the tips of his fingers, the piece of platinum. In a secret breast pocket of his coat he has a small reservoir of hydrogen, with a tube coming down the sleeve and terminating an inch or so above the cuff. By means of certain mechanical arrangements, to enable him to let on and off the gas at the proper moment, he is able to accomplish the trick; for when a current of hydrogen is allowed to impinge upon a piece of spongy platinum, the metal becomes incandescent, and as soon as the current is arrested the platinum is restored to its normal condition."

This explanation is certainly ingenious, but I do not see how it can be made to explain these phenomena in the Home séances. In the first place we must give so expert a chemist as Sir William Crookes the credit for being able to distinguish between a live coal and a piece of incandescent platinum — with the looks of both of which he was surely well acquainted. Then, too, how is the smell, inseparable from an experiment of this kind, to be accounted for? For we must remember that the séances all took place in a private house. Finally, how are we to explain the fact that the sitter, on several occasions, held the live coal in his *own* hands? Did Home have the audacity to hand his sitter the piece of platinum too? And if so, how came it about that the sitter felt the heat of the coal with his cheek, at the time he was holding it in his hands, and even raised a blister on his finger "the size of a sixpence"? To my mind, the explanations do not explain. What the ultimate explanation may be, or whether the phenomena will ever be explained at all, I do not know; I am merely protesting against the tendency to explain, *too readily,* phenomena that are not understood, in the state of our present-day knowledge, and the explanations of which

must not be forced, because "an explanation of *some* kind must be found" of the phenomena observed! Better have no explanation at all than to adopt a wrong one.

In considering these phenomena, it must be borne in mind that those observed in the presence of D. D. Home are not the only ones of the sort that have been recorded. Outside of the phenomena produced in the presence of professional mediums, outside of the phenomena of séances altogether, there are many recorded cases in which individuals have been enabled to handle and to walk over red-hot coals, without visible injury, this performance being known, in the parts of the world where it is practised, as the "fire-walk." In order to show the close resemblance between these phenomena, observed mostly in uncivilized countries, and such phenomena as those observed in the presence of D. D. Home (at least I presume this was the main motive?), Mr. Andrew Lang collected and published in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XV., pp. 2-15, a collection of well attested cases of the fire-walk, some of them being of quite recent date.

Here we find cases in which natives walk across beds of blazing coals with bare feet, without receiving burns, or even marks that would seem to indicate that the flesh had in any way been subjected to great heat. It is asserted that the heat is withstood by the natives on account of the extreme toughness of the soles of their feet, they being hardened by continued walking barefooted from childhood. This explanation does not altogether cover the case, however, as can readily be seen, when we take into consideration the fact (1) that the stones or coals across which the natives walk would presumably burn flesh, however hardened or toughened (the heat, for instance, being great enough to instantly cause a green branch of the *ti* the natives carried with them to burst into flame, when thrown on to the coals or heated stones — p. 5); and (2) because the natives who wore European dress, shoes included, and even Europeans themselves, have walked through the fire without in any way being harmed, Colonel Gudgeon, British resident, Raro-

tonga, himself going through this ordeal, under the guidance of the native priests.[1]

Similar cases of fire-walking are recorded in various other books, and in other places. Mr. Lowell has seen cases in Japan.[2] A remarkable case will be found in William E. Barton's *Faith as Related to Health*, pp. 45-7. Several very fine cases are reported in *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. IX., pp.

[1] This is very interesting, and has often been observed in ordeals of this character. Mr. Lowell, for instance, tells us, in his *Occult Japan*, that he witnessed the performance of walking upon sharp swords — the edges of which he examined and found to be " as sharp as one would care to handle — from the hilt — and much sharper than he would care to handle in any less legitimate manner." The native priests, nevertheless, walked up a ladder of these swords, without cutting or even indenting the soles of their feet. The explanation offered is that this " miracle " is due, partly to the toughness of the soles of the feet (which may, perhaps, have been helped along by some preparation rubbed into the soles), and partly to the fact that the priests were careful not to let the foot slip on the knife-edge — a large amount of pressure being required to cut the flesh, if the pressure be applied *gradually*, and without allowing the knife-edge to slip along the surface of the skin. This is the explanation offered in Shaw's *Book of Acts*, in which a large number of these " side show " tricks and devices are exposed. That the completeness of such an explanation is questionable (so far as it relates to the toughness of the soles of the feet) is proved by the fact that Mr. Lowell's own " boy " did the same thing in front of his very eyes! " Asa, my house-boy, fired to emulation, suddenly pulled off his European boots and socks, rolled up his European trousers, and presented himself for a candidate for the climb. To my eye, the outlandishness of his dress, amid the archaic costumes of the priests, gave him at once that unsuitable appearance to the deed so consecrated to the supposed countryman who volunteers at the circus. I should certainly have had my doubts about the genuineness of his inexperience had I not known him for my own boy. . . . To my surprise, and I think his own, he went as well as the best of them. We watched him with some vanity and more concern, and were suddenly electrified when, half-way up to the top, he turned, and, with a triumphant smile, made, he too, the approved *coryphee* kick high in the air. It brought down the house, but not the boy, who continued on successfully, till at last he stepped out triumphantly at the top. He was obliged to abbreviate the prayer, from not knowing it, and then he too came down the regulation back stairs " (p. 83).

The point to observe, in the above narrative, is that it is wrong to attribute any part of the success of the performance to the toughness of the soles of the feet existing in those persons undergoing the test. The explanation must be found elsewhere — whether it be that offered by Mr. Lowell or not. Doubtless the explanation of this test is a perfectly normal one. My only reason for calling attention to it here is in order to show that the toughness of the soles of the feet — always assumed by Europeans as sufficient to explain anything of the kind recorded — frequently does not exist, as, in the fire tests, Europeans and persons having tender feet are enabled to go through the test just as easily as the natives. This is also true of the remarkable cases of boiling water tests, mentioned by Mr. Lowell (pp. 43-6), which we cannot stop to consider now.

[2] *Occult Japan*, pp. 47-62.

312-21. Professor Langley, of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, reported a very interesting case in *Journal S. P. R.*, Vol. X., pp. 116-21. Further cases and discussions will be found in *Journal*, Vol. X., pp. 132-4, 154-5, 250-3, etc.

The net result of the discussion so far is this: that there are evidences of a capacity by the body for resisting great heat for a certain period, be the explanation of that fact normal or supernormal. We have seen that the phenomena observed in the presence of Home, on certain occasions, is paralleled by certain other cases in which much the same phenomena occurred, and which cannot, at least, be attributed to fraudulent manipulation of the coals, substitution of "spongy platinum," etc., as in the case of Home. The explanation of these phenomena may ultimately prove to be a purely normal one, though the evidence, in some cases, would seem to point to a contrary conclusion. However, the question of the interpretation and explanation of the facts does not concern us now. Our chief and immediate concern is the question whether such phenomena really occur at all, they being of such a nature as to apparently *suggest* a supernormal explanation? If the phenomena are proved to exist, then it will be time enough for us to search for the causes and explanations of the phenomena. The evidence accumulated in recent times, supplementing that obtained in the presence of D. D. Home, certainly seems to show that these phenomena really do exist, be their explanation what it may.

A word as to the *possible* explanation of such facts, should they ever prove to be such. It has been proved, in recent years, that a hypnotic subject can, by appropriate suggestion, be made quite insensible to pain, and may even be severely burnt and otherwise injured, without being in any way aware of the fact. The skin is not injured to the same extent that it would be, were the experiment conducted under normal conditions, and the burns heal far more rapidly than they would normally heal. Now, the fire-walkers are, as a rule, in a state closely bordering on trance; the religious ecstasy into which they have worked themselves being in

many ways allied to that condition, as can readily be shown. This, then, would partially, at least, account for the lack of pain experienced at the time, and enable us to understand how it is that the natives can walk through the "fiery furnace *à la mode*" without experiencing the pain and suffering usually associated with burns or the proximity of extreme heat, such as that which must doubtless be present, in many cases. But, as Mr. Podmore points out,[1] "the insensibility even to severe pain which accompanies states of trance and ecstasy, (while it) would no doubt account for the subjective immunity of the devotees, (still) it will hardly explain why the skin of the bare feet and legs was not scorched by the heat which, in some cases, according to the observers, kindled green leaves and melted solder on a thermometer case." That is the *crux*. Why was not the flesh burnt, even though the pain was not felt by the fire-walker? We must assume that this mental condition would be *such* only, and could not affect the conditions of, and injuries to, the bodily tissue. Yet, even here, we might find a partial explanation, and without going beyond the bounds or recognized limits of physiology and psychology. The mental condition has much to do with the speedy or slow recovery of the patient, far more than most people know or would admit, until the facts are explained to them. The fact is that in burns generally it is the cure that constitutes the complaint. It is the body's feverish anxiety to repair the damage that causes all the trouble. Even in the severest burns very little of us is ever burnt up, but our own alarm that it may be induces our consequent inflammation. Delbœuf showed this conclusively upon one of his hypnotized patients. Faith, therefore, *does* in very truth work the miracle. To a large extent the mental condition can, in reality, affect the bodily conditions, and the effects of the burns received.

It might be conceived, indeed, that the explanation lies deeper than any that have so far been offered. It might be conceived, it appears to me, that the "emanations" proceeding from the human body, discovered by Reichenbach, and

[1] *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., p. 265.

established scientifically by De Rochas, Elmer Gates, and others (if reports speak truly), might be sufficiently centred and concentrated at one point to have the effect of resisting the effects of heat, for some considerable period, — thereby preventing it from reaching the skin of the person undergoing the trial. It would, in fact, act as a sort of protecting surface or veil. I offer this suggestion for what it is worth, as I have not noticed it advanced elsewhere, and, with this speculative conclusion, I leave this branch of the discussion.

CHAPTER XXII

TRANCE — THE CASE OF MRS. PIPER

On p. 5, it was pointed out that the real problem of spiritualism was whether or not it was possible to establish any sort of communication with a spirit-world, thereby obtaining evidence of the soul's survival of bodily death, that being, in fact, the *real* problem, the physical phenomena having nothing to do with the question, strictly speaking. The question before the scientific world is merely whether it is possible, by some means or another, to isolate some individual consciousness after death, so to speak, and to get into communication with it. If that consciousness was then enabled to give proofs of its identity, — to furnish proofs that it was, in reality, the consciousness it claimed to be, — then we should have scientifically demonstrated the existence of the soul apart from the physical organism, from which it follows that it is *possible* for the soul to exist, because it actually does so! It is useless to argue about the "possibility" of the soul's existence, when we have facts at hand which will either *prove* or *disprove* it. The question should be treated as purely an evidential one, the proof centring around the fact of whether or not the *soi-disant* spirit is enabled to produce evidence, as a proof of its identity, which is convincing to the scientific world. In order for a spirit to do this, it would be necessary for it to show a knowledge of certain facts and be possessed of certain information which that person knew in real life, and which it might be supposed to know still. If the communicating intelligence shows just this knowledge, and demonstrates that it is possessed of the information that that person, alive, possessed; and if this is

given to the world through the medium, then we have very good evidence that the intelligence is what it claims to be — the spirit of the departed person. If it is not, where did the medium obtain the knowledge of the facts which is exhibited in the trance state?

A number of methods in which this knowledge can be obtained by fraudulent means have already been given (pp. 312-18), and that the vast majority of mediums employ some such methods, and obtain their knowledge of sitters' dead friends and relatives in the manner there suggested, there can be no doubt. The majority of all "test" and "trance mediums" are frauds, just as the mediums for physical manifestations are frauds. Mediums will combine together and exchange information about prospective and present sitters, and furnish one another with all the information they need, in order to dazzle the sitter with the number, the exactitude, and the quality of the tests furnished. An astonishing amount of information can be acquired in this manner, and palmed off upon the sitter as genuine spirit evidence. Before we can seriously consider the supernormal powers of any trance medium, therefore, or the information that is imparted through her, we must first of all satisfy ourselves that the medium is genuine, and not a mere fraud, and that the messages are delivered in a genuine trance state, before considering the internal value of the evidence. The question of fraud must first of all be considered in such cases, and the fact thoroughly demonstrated that it does not enter into the question, before the messages can have any weight whatever.

In the case of Mrs. Piper, this question of fraud was considered most carefully in the early years of the Society's investigations, and the more we study the case, the more are we convinced that there cannot possibly be any system of fraud that would account for it. Were all the mediums in the United States to combine their information, for the exclusive use of Mrs. Piper, and were she to conduct an elaborate system of private and paid inquiry herself, that would not begin to account for many of the incidents that have transpired at the Piper séances, or for the case as a whole.

The theory of fraud was carefully considered by Mr. Podmore,[1] who concluded that fraud could not be stretched sufficiently to cover the case. This was also the opinion of Mrs. Henry Sidgwick,[2] Mr. Andrew Lang,[3] Prof. W. R. Newbold,[4] as well as of all those who have drawn up the reports on Mrs. Piper's trances — Doctor Hodgson, Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. Walter Leaf, Prof. William James, Professor Hyslop, Professor Sidgwick, Mrs. Sidgwick, Mr. Myers, Professor Richet, etc. That so acute an investigator as Doctor Hodgson — one so well acquainted with the tricks and devices employed by fraudulent mediums — should be convinced of this medium's honesty, is strong evidence in her favor, if there were none other available. But the conditions of the case rendered it quite impossible for the medium to have obtained her information by fraudulent means, partly because the watch kept upon her was too strict, and partly because the medium was taken to England for purposes of investigation by members of the S. P. R., and she had, perforce, to live in the home of one or other of the investigators, throughout her stay there. It is useless for me to attempt any statement of the case here, however, my space being far too limited; interested readers I would refer to the Reports themselves, and they can form their own opinions thereon.

Once the genuine nature of the trance state be granted, and the fact that the messages that come through the medium's mouth (automatic utterance), or hand (automatic writing), are not the products of conscious fraud, there is opened before us a problem the extent of which no man can fathom. That does not necessarily mean that the messages that are delivered in the trance state are spirit messages — not by any means; they may be the result of the activity of the secondary consciousness of the medium, active, at the time, and passing itself off as a spirit — the supernormal knowledge displayed being gained by means of telepathy, clairvoyance, and such supernormal processes, and

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XIV., pp. 50-78.
[2] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XV., pp. 16-38.
[3] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XV., pp. 39-52.
[4] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Vol. XIV., pp. 6-49.

woven together by the medium's secondary consciousness to personate a spirit. We know that this is frequently done, the analogy of hypnotically induced personalities guiding us in the investigation of these trance personalities. Whether we have to seek beyond any such interpretation of the facts, and be ultimately forced into an acceptance of some sort of spiritistic theory, as a working hypothesis, is too large a question to be discussed here. In such books as Professor Hyslop's *Science and a Future Life* and M. Sage's *Mrs. Piper and the Society for Psychical Research* the problem will be found discussed at length, though in a semi-popular manner, suitable for readers who do not care to read through the voluminous reports contained in the Society's *Proceedings*. To those books and publications I would refer the interested student for full particulars of this most marvellous case.

The difficulties that are encountered in any investigation such as this should be apparent. Even after the genuine supernormal state has been granted, the problem only begins, and the difficulties *within* the problem are such as to cause many a man to halt and turn back. But it must be pointed out that, whether spiritism be accepted or not, as the true explanation of the present problem, there is no scientific *objection* to the theory of spiritism, as such, as many persons think. It must be remembered that, even in this life, we only *infer* the presence of a consciousness, in any individual, by its outward manifestations, by bodily movements, or by the marks made upon paper by the body in some of its movements, and reinterpreted by us back into consciousness. We never come into any actual contact with a consciousness, throughout life, and we never can; we know it only by *inference* from external bodily or vibratory movements. Now, if those movements were to stop, at any time, we should be justified in supposing that the consciousness was no longer present, inasmuch as we no longer have evidence of its existence. Yet, in many cases, we know that this would be mistaken inference; as in trance, paralysis, and kindred states and affections that render impossible the usual outward

manifestation of consciousness, the consciousness continues to exist, though there is no evidence of its existence, and we should theoretically be justified in asserting that the consciousness was no longer active and alive. Now, at death, this same cessation of the external evidences of consciousness takes place, but we are not thereby entitled to assert that the consciousness is obliterated any more than it was obliterated in the cases above cited. It may have been simply *withdrawn*, and this hypothesis would leave us free to believe in the possibility of a consciousness existing after the death of the body, and it would then become merely a matter of *evidence* as to whether it did so exist, or not. It would no longer be a question of theory, but of fact. And that is the standpoint of the psychical researcher, who throws theory to the winds, and confines himself to the investigation of *facts*, and to those alone. After the facts are established, it will be time enough to theorize about them.

CHAPTER XXIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The task I set myself is now complete, and it but remains for me to summarize the results attained. We have seen that the vast bulk of the physical phenomena of spiritualism are certainly produced by fraudulent means and devices, and that, so far as the professional medium is concerned, at any rate, we are to expect nothing genuine in the way of either mental or physical phenomena. It is best to rely entirely on the results obtained through the services of non-professional mediums, and even here we must assure ourselves that the conditions of the experiment render fraud a *physical* impossibility, before we assume that the phenomena observed are the result of any supernormal power or force. The methods by which an expert can deceive his sitter are so numerous that it is an utter impossibility for the average person to detect the fraud practised upon him, for, if he could, mediumship of that character would soon be a thing of the past. Before the real or genuine phenomena can be discovered and brought to the attention of the scientific world, therefore, this preliminary work of disposing of the fraudulent side of the question must first be undertaken and systematically carried out; and it is with the hope that this book may help, in some small degree, to make clear the characteristics of the fraudulent phenomena, and to show the means by which they are performed (thus placing the sitter on his guard, and enabling him to distinguish the fraudulent from the genuine), that the task of compiling it has been undertaken.

While sounding a timely warning, however, by thus calling the public attention to the methods of trickery at present

in vogue, I do not wish it to be understood that I thereby relegate the *whole* of the evidence for the supernormal to the waste-basket. That is precisely what I do *not* wish to do or lead others to do. It is because I believe that there do exist certain phenomena, the explanations for which have not yet been found, and which I think science should be induced to systematically study, that I think it necessary to distinguish those phenomena from the fraudulent "marvels" so commonly produced, and which are the only spiritualistic phenomena with which the public is acquainted. When these shall have been cleared away, and the weeding-out process carried sufficiently far to enable us to see what are the "real problems" to be solved, then the real, systematic, scientific study of psychic phenomena will have begun.

In the present book, I have, accordingly, tried to show which phenomena are most probably genuine, and hence most worthy of the initial study of the scientific world. Raps, telekinetic phenomena, trance, apparitions, haunted houses, telepathy, clairvoyance, premonitions, as well as hypnotic phenomena, alterations of personality, subconscious mental activity, all these phenomena can be investigated by scientists, and *should* be investigated, since they have much evidence in their favor (as real phenomena) and investigation along these lines is much to be desired. It is to be hoped that the scientific world will shortly realize its duty, in this respect, and undertake the inquiry so long neglected.

I cannot claim that the present book is in any way exhaustive, since the subject is practically inexhaustible. New methods of trickery will doubtless be invented by mediums, from time to time; but it is probable that the physical phenomena of spiritualism will gradually die out, owing to fewer and fewer believers in the reality of the phenomena, and that in a short time there will be but few mediums who can make a living at this "phase" of the subject. So soon as the trade ceases to be profitable, it is certain that the professional medium will cease to exist, and then we may arrive at that point when a scientific examination of genuine phenomena can be undertaken. In short, psychical research will

then itself become a science. It is the hope of the author that — by clearing away many of the obstructions that exist, in the shape of fraudulent phenomena — this book may help to lay the foundations of such a science.

THE END.

INDEX

Abbott, Mrs., Performances of, 204.
Ability to detect fraud, 60.
Abnormality, Question of, 58, 327-30, 363-4.
Accordion test, Zöllner's, 28; methods of playing, by fraud, 199-200; Crookes' experiments with Home, 374-7; case recorded by M. J. Savage, 374.
Aksakof, M., On a case of partial dematerialization of a medium's body, 235-7.
Apports, Theories of, 253; inconclusive nature of evidence for, 253; methods of obtaining by fraud, 254.
Attention, Distraction of, 49.

Baldwins, The, Their mind-reading performance, 308-10.
Bandage test, Inconclusive nature of, 7.
Bangs sisters, Exposure of, 91.
Barrett, Prof. W. F., On table-turning, 65-6; on raps, 340-1, 350-1; on the mediumship of D. D. Home, 388.
Bellachini, Evidence of, in favor of Slade, 40; why inconclusive, 40-1.
Bennett, E. T., On the neglect of the investigation of raps, 346.
Binet, Prof. A., On table-turning, 71.
Blank séances *vs.* exposure, 62.
Blavatsky, Mme., Once a spiritualist, 15; her method of obtaining spirit-pictures, 221.
" Blue Book," Description of, 314-16.
Bolts, Trick, 183.
Braune, Prof., Levitated by Slade, 28.
Brotherhood of mediums, 314-16.

Cabinets, " Spirit," 184; examination of, 272-5; miniature, 202-3.
Cage test, 184.
Cheiro's instrument for measuring " psychic force," 358-9.
Clairvoyance, historical evidence for, 6-7.
Clothes, Methods of concealing, in a guitar, 249-50; in a dummy watch, 250; in hollow boot-heel, 250; in hollow table and chair legs, 250; in a snare-drum, 260; in a table drawer, 261.
Collar, " Spirit," 183.
Colley, Archdeacon, On materialization, 238.
Compass, Experiments with, 25-6.
Conditions required at séances, 187, 334-5.
Conjuring, Psychological rules of, 48, 49, 50.
Consciousness, Always inferred, 413-14.
Conviction, Only induced by mass of evidence, 360.
Cotton bandage test, 149-52.
Crawford, Earl of (*see* Lindsay, Master of).

Crookes, Sir William, On materialization, 237; on raps, 341-2; on Home's phenomena, 377; his spring-balance test, 373-4; on levitation, 379-80; on the fire tests, 400-1.
Crowd, Psychology of, 59-60.
Cui bono? Question of, 325-6.

Davenport brothers, History of, 153; description of the light séance, 154-7; description of the dark séance, 158-61; explanation of the rope ties, 161-4; the flour test, 164-5; playing of musical instruments, 166; outline of feet on paper trick, 166-7; coat test, 167.
Davey, S. J., On Eglinton, 87-8; duplicating Eglinton's séances, 88-90.
Dematerialization (*see* Materialization).
Dessoir, Prof. Max, On the psychology of conjuring, 51.
Development fraud, 260.
Direction of the movement of table, 70-1.
Dowsing, As an example of unconscious muscular action, 68-9; sensations during, 366.

Eddy Brothers, Description of séance and cabinet, 193-4; explanation of the séance, 194-5.
Eglinton's mediumship, 85-7, 89-90.
Electrical conditions of the body, 359.
Elongation, Case of D. D. Home, 394-5; nature of the evidence, 395-6, 399; criticism of the evidence, 399; recent case of, 396-7; criticism of, 397-8.
Envelopes, Imperfect sealing of, 286; opacity of, 286.
d'Esperance, Mme., Mediumship of, 235-7.
Examination of cabinets, 272-5; of trick-slates, 123.
Exposure *vs.* blank séances, 62.
Eyes, As distractors of attention, 48.

Facts, as opposed to their interpretation, 321-2, 323, 359, 361, 414.
Faraday, Prof., On table-turning, 67.
Fay, Annie Eva, 152-3 (*see* Cotton bandage test).
Fays, The, Their mind-reading performance, 310-11.
Fechner, Prof., On Slade, 28.
Fire tests, Cases of, 399-401; nature of the evidence in, 401-2, 403, 404, 405, 407; methods of duplicating by fraud, 402-4.
Fire walk, Phenomena of, 405-7; possible explanations of, 407-9.
Flammarion, Camille, On the importance of psychical research, 327.
Flournoy, Prof., On telekinesis, 368-9.
Force, Extent of, possessed by table, 66, 68.
Forms, Materialized, by means of robes and masks, 251; by impersonations by the medium, 251.
Foster, Charles H., Mediumship of, 7-8; exposure of, 8; confession of, 9.
Fox sisters, 77; report of the "Buffalo Doctors," 78; inconclusive nature of the evidence, 78; Harvard professors on, 78; Seybert Commission on, 78.
Fraud, Extent of, 6; ability to detect, 60.
Full-form materialization, Methods of producing by fraud, 256-7; materialization from the floor by fraudulent means, 257; description of séance for, 261-7.
Funk, Dr. I. K., On spirit-photography, 209.

Furness, Dr., On Keeler's spirit-photographs, 207.
Future life, only proved by psychical research phenomena, 324, 327; no *a priori* objections to, 413.

Genuine phenomena, *Residuum* of, 336, 416.
Guitar, Self-playing, 197; method of playing when both hands are held, 197-8.

Hallucination: In connection with poltergeist phenomena, 365; at W. S. Moses' séances, 365; in haunted houses, 365-6; in the Home case: Podmore on, 386-7; evidence supporting his position, 387-8; evidence opposed to it, 388-93.
Hammond, Dr., On electrical conditions of the body, 359.
Handcuffs, The trick chain link, 179-80; methods of loosening locks, 181; keys, number and make of, 181; methods of disposing of the keys, 182; manipulation of the keys, 182-3.
Hands, materialized, methods of producing by fraud, 244-9.
Hare, Dr., Experiments of, 19.
Henry, T. S., On the exposure of Mrs. Mellon, 233-4.
Hindu juggler incident, 53.
Hodgson, Dr. R., On bandaging the eyes, 7; on Eusapia Paladino, 12; on the theosophical phenomena, 16, 18; on slate-writing phenomena, 57; on Eglinton, 86; on Mrs. Abbott, 205; on abnormal conditions in the trance state, 329; vitality sapped by sittings with Mrs. Piper, 357; on Indian magic, 390, 392-3; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Holding tests, Satisfactory nature of, 186; amount of control allowed in, 187; finger hold, 187; release from, 188; hands held by the medium, 189; wrist hold, 189; release from, 190; clapping hands test, 190; feather test, 190; encircled arms release, 191; confederates, 191; foot release, 191-2; Paladino hold, 192; false hand and handkerchief test, 192-3.
Home, D. D., Never detected in fraud, 372; his character, 372-3 (*see* under Levitation, Elongation, Fire tests, Accordion tests, Hallucinations; *also* Crookes, Jencken, Podmore, etc.).
Horn, Methods of playing under test conditions, 201-2.
Houdin, Robert, On the Davenport brothers, 154-67.
Houdini, Harry, His handcuff act, 179, 182.
Hyslop, Prof. J. H., On Hare's experiments, 19; on Zöllner's experiments, 37-9; on Mrs. Abbott, 205; on importance of psychical research, 327; on the real problems of psychical research, 333; on Mrs. Piper, 412.

Indian magic, 389-93; affords no evidence of hallucination theory in the Home case, 393.
Inference and observation, Relation of, 52, 59.
Imperfect sealing of envelopes, 286.
Information concerning sitters, Methods of gathering, 313-18.
Interpretation of facts observed, 65, 321-2, 323.
Intelligence, possessed by table, 66, 72; hypothetical explanations of 369-70.

Jacolliot, M., On raps, 347-9.
James, Prof. William, On Mrs. Piper, 412.
Jastrow, Prof. Joseph, On the psychology of deception, 57-8; on unconscious muscular action, 67.
Jencken, H. D., On Home's elongation, 394.
Johnson, Miss Alice, On Eusapia Paladino, 13.

Kellar, Harry, A pupil of the Davenports, 153.
Knots in endless cords, 35-6; probable explanation of, 41-3; methods of fraudulently obtaining, 43-7.
Keeler, W., Inconclusive nature of his spirit-photographs, 207.

Lang, Andrew, On the question of the utility of psychical research, 326; on abnormality, 330; on poltergeists, 363; on hallucination in the Home case, 388; on Home's fire tests, 401; on the fire walk, 405; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Langley, Prof., On the fire walk, 407.
Languages, Foreign, supposedly unknown to the medium, 62.
Leaf, Dr. Walter, On Mrs. Piper, 412.
Levitation, Cases of, 377-80; mass of evidence in favor of, 381; methods of fraudulently imitating, 382-3; theories of, 383-5; relation to telekinetic phenomena, 386.
Lewis, Prof. Carvill, On Eglinton, 86.
Lights, "Spirit," methods of obtaining by fraud, 252-3.
Limits of the possible, 322-3, 393.
Lindsay, Master of, On Home's levitation, 378-9; on Home's elongation, 395; on the fire tests, 399-400.
Lodge, Sir O. J., On Mrs. Abbott, 205; on telekinesis, 368, 370-1; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Lowell, Percival, On sensations experienced during possession, 357; on the fire walk, 406.
Luminous paint, Methods of powdering, 269; methods of utilizing, 269-70.

Maldescription, Examples of, 54, 55-6, 56-7.
Maskelyne, J. N., On Mrs. Abbott, 204; on materialization, 238; on the Davenports, 153.
Materialism, as opposed to spiritualism, 3.
Materialization, Theory of, 230; scientific possibility of, 231, 237; history of fraud in connection with, 231-2, 234; full-form (*see* Full-form materialization).
Materializing séance, Description of, 239-44, 261-7; methods of fraudulently producing materialization from the floor, 271-2.
Matter through matter, Explanation of a supposed case of, 33-4.
Maxwell, Dr., On Eusapia Paladino, 13; on the Davey-Hodgson séances, 90; on materialization, 237; on abnormality, 329-30; on raps, 342-4, 345; on the personality of raps, 350-1; theory of the nature of, 355-7; on telekinetic phenomena, 360, 367-8, 369-70.
Mellon, Mrs.. Endorsed by Wm. T. Stead, 232; exposure of, 233-4.
Mind-reading performances, —telling the total of a row of figures on a slate, 295; conveying information by means of a fountain-pen, 295-6; code signals, 296-7; communicating by electricity, 297-8; by means of a mirror, 298; silent codes: by passes, 298-300; the Svengalis' performance, 300-2; by finger and arm movements, 302-5; by deep breathing, 305-6; by mental counting, 306-8; the Baldwins' performance, 308-10; the Fays' performance, 310-11.
Miracles, Scientific possibility of, 385.
Morbidity, Question of, 58, 327-30, 363-4.
Moses, W. S., *Résumé* of case, 14; paradoxical nature of evidence, 15.
Movement of objects without contact (*see* Telekinesis).
Muscle-reading, Distinct from mind-reading, 291; *modus operandi* of, 293-4.
Music-boxes, Trick, 198-9.
Myers, F. W. H., On materialization, 237; on the importance of psychical

research, 327; on morbidity, 328; on telekinesis, 368, 371; on Mrs. Piper, 412.

Names, How found and given by a medium, 317.
Newbold, Prof. W., On Mrs. Piper, 412.
Note-taking at séances, 60-1.
Numbers on watches, How to tell, 280.

Objections to a future life, No *a priori*, 413.
Observation and inference, Relation of, 52, 59.
Opacity of envelopes, 286.
Ostwald, Dr., On scientific methods, 325.
Ouija board, Explanation of movements of, 67, 70, 72.
Owen, R. D., On the importance of psychical research, 327.

Paintings, Oil (spirit), produced by fraud, 221; trap-door method, 222; hollow chair method, 222; duplicate canvas method, 222; chemical method, 222; self-developing method, 222-3.
Paladino, Eusapia, Early mediumship of, 11; Ile Roubaud phenomena, 11-12; Dr. Hodgson's attack on, 12; Cambridge sittings with, 12; detection of fraud in, 12; newer evidence, 13; Dr. Maxwell's defence of, 13; inconclusiveness of the case, 13-14; method of holding her hands and the release, 192.
Palma exposed, 91.
Paraffine mould test, described, 224-5; methods of producing the moulds, 225; apparent impossibility of obtaining by normal means, 226; where the moulds are secreted, 227; how the moulds are introduced into the cabinet, 227; methods of decreasing the weight of the pail, 227-8; moulds obtained over materialized faces, 229; explanation of, 229.
Pathological states (*see* Morbidity *and* Abnormality).
Peculiarity of sound, in raps, 347-9.
Personal experience, in obtaining raps, 352-4.
Personality of the raps, 349-51.
Peters, Alfred, Elongation of, 396-7.
Photographing Indian conjurors, 391-2.
Photography of supernormal events, 76.
Photography, Spirit (*see* Spirit-photography).
Philosophy, Worthlessness of, for proving future life, 324, 332-3.
Pictures, Spirit, on slates, 115-6 (*see* Paintings).
Piper, Mrs., Question of abnormality of, 329; feeling of depression after sitting, 357; impossibility of fraud in the case of, 411-2; alternative theories of trance personalities, 412-3.
Planchette board, explanation of its movements, 67, 70, 72.
Planting a town, 313.
Podmore, Frank, On Hare's experiments, 20; on table-turning, 65; on the Davenports, 153; on the Home phenomena, 336-7, 377; on poltergeists, 362-3; on Home's character, 372; on hallucination in the Home case, 386-7; on Home's elongation, 398-9; on Home's fire tests, 401-2; on the fire walk, 408; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Poltergeists, 362-7.
Possible, Limits of the, 322-3, 393.
Posts, Spirit, 168-71.
Power, Pretended exhaustion of, 63.
Precipitated chalk marks, 142.
Prejudice of scientific men, 322.

Preparations of medium for séance, 172-3.
Professional mediums, Untrustworthy character of, 9-10.
Psychical research, Nature of the evidence in, 24; present crude condition of, 324.

Raps, Methods of obtaining by fraud, 79-82; scientific possibility of, 340; possibility of controlling, 345-6, 353; sensations during the production of, 345; personal experience in obtaining, 352-4; possible explanation of, 355-7.
Rapping chairs, 79; tables, 78.
Real problems psychical research has to solve, 5, 332-3, 410-11, 414.
Religious objections to the study of psychical research, considered, 326, 331.
Richet, Prof. Charles, On materialization, 237; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Ring passed onto arm test, 33-4.
Rope-climbing exploit, 390-2.
Rope-tying methods: "Slack," how to obtain, 143-4, 146; tape test, 144-5; breaking the seals method, 146; duplicate rope method, 146; false sleeves method, 147; spirit necktie, 147-9; post tests: chisel method, 168-70; hollow post method, 170-1; staples and swinging board test, 171; spiritualistic couch, 172; pillory, 172.
Rules for conjurers, 48, 49, 50.

Sack tests: Method with a duplicate sack, 173-4; bolster method, 174-5; method with a steel collar, 175; method with sealed tapes, 175-9.
Savage, Minot J., On the accordion test, 374.
Scientific men, Prejudice of, 322.
Sealed-letter reading, 7-8; carbon sheet (pad) method, 276-7; paraffine sheet method, 277; soaped sheet method, 277; sheet of glass method, 277; soft paper and hard pencil method, 278; exchange of pellets method, 279; the "one ahead" trick, 279-80; numbers on watches, how to tell, 280; sealed-letter reading: public séances, 280-2; by means of trick-table, 283; alcohol and envelope test, 284; the slit envelope method, 285; answer on the inside of the envelope, 285-6; imperfect sealing of envelopes, 286; opacity of envelopes, 286; mirror table, 287; methods of opening sealed letters, 287-90.
Séance, a producer of abnormal mental states, 58.
Searching medium: Methods of concealing clothes during the process of, 250-1, 256-7.
Seeman, "Baron" Hartwig, On raps, 349.
Sensations during the production of phenomena, 345, 356-7, 366-7.
Sidgwick, Prof. H., On Dr. Hart's criticisms of psychical research, 322; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Sidgwick, Mrs., Criticisms of Zöllner's experiments, 37; on Eglinton, 85; on spirit-photography, 208-9; on Mrs. Mellon, 232; on Mrs. Piper, 412.
Slade, Dr. Henry, Career of, 20-4; fraud committed by, detected by Seybert Commission, 21; by J. W. Truesdell, 22, 23; confession of, 22, 23; slate tests of, 25; Carl Willmann's testimony concerning, 25; experiments with a compass, 25-6; telekinetic phenomena, 26-7; levitation, 27-8; coins in sealed boxes test, 29; impressions of naked feet, 29-30; rings on table-leg, 30-1; probable explanation of, 31-2; knots in endless cords, 35-6; probable explanation of, 41-3; defective nature of the evidence, 36-41.
Slate-writing séances, Imperfections of evidence in, 54; Slate-writing tests: Methods of obtaining writing by fraud:
§ 1. *With a single slate (prepared).*
Flap method, 91-2; another use for the flap, 92; silk flap, 92-3; endless

band slate, 93; another way of working the flap-slate, 94-6; the imperfect flap, 96-7; slate and pellet test, 97-8; onion juice method, 98; colored chalks method, 99; acid writing method, 99; scratching method, 100; producing the sound of writing, 100-1.

§ 2. *With a single slate* (*unprepared*).

Medium invariably handles the slates, 102-3; difficulties of detecting trickery, 103; the finger-nail method, 104-5; thimble method, 106; prepared finger method, 106; the " materialized " slate-pencil test, 106-8; watch-spring and card method, 109; the alcohol test, 109; the caustic pencil test, 110-11; strip of wood test, 111; writing with the toes, 111-12; writing with the teeth, 112; method with a pile of four slates, 112-13; same test — another method, 113-14; the slit carpet test, 114; trick-chair method, 114-15; exchange by means of the table-cloth, 116-17; hollow table and boy method, 117-18; hollow table and trap-door method, 118.

§ 3. *Methods with a double slate* (*prepared*).

False flap and spring catch method, 119; the grooved-frame slate test, 120; the cardboard slate test, 120-1; the key and thimble method, 121; the flap and transposition method, 122; the trick-hinge slate, 122; the box slate, 122-3; answer on the question-paper test, 123; same test — when the paper is marked, 123-4; hinged slate and trick table method, 124; slate-writing by electricity, 124; slate and prepared dictionary test, 124-5; method with an ordinary dictionary, 125-7.

§ 4. *Methods with a double slate* (*unprepared*).

Wedge and umbrella wire test, 128-9; transposition and substitution method, 129-30; frameless slates test, 130-1; pellets and slate substitution method, 132-4; public test séances, 134; magnet and trick-chalk method, 134-6; trap-door method, 136-8; table drawer method, 138; bureau method, 138.

§ 5. *Miscellaneous tests.*

Hermetically sealed vials, 139; writing obtained by heat, 140; chemical methods, 140; exchange of vials, 140; blood writing on the arm: pointed stick method, 140-1; glycerine and ashes method, 141; strip of wood method, 141; spirit-typewriter test, 141-2.

Sound of writing, Difficulty in locating, 100; methods of imitating the sound of writing by fraud, 100-1.

Spirit-photography, Problem of, 206; conditions excluding fraud in, 207; Seybert Commission on, 207; A. R. Wallace on, 208; Mrs. Sidgwick on, 208-9; inconclusive nature of the evidence for, 209-11; theoretical possibility of, 210; methods of obtaining by fraud: imperfect cleansing of the plates, 214; glass bath and concealed light method, 215; exposure while examining plate, 215-16; microscopic picture device, 216; by retouching, 216; double exposure, 217; painting the back screen, 217; celluloid figures, 217; double printing, 217; faces obtained on plates in a strange city, 218-20; pictures, " spirit," obtained by fraud, 220-1.

Spiritism, Defined, 3.

Spiritualism, Defined, 3, 4; origins of, 4; not dependent upon physical phenomena, 4-5; extent of fraud connected with, 6; as a creed, rationality of, 338; summing-up of, 338-9.

Spring balance test (Crookes), 373-4.

Standard of evidence, 323-4.

Staples, Trick, 183.

Stead, William T., On Mrs. Mellon, 232.

" Suckers," Meaning of the term, 258; methods of " working," 258-60.

Suggestion, a factor in the distraction of attention, 49.

Svengalis, The, Their mind-reading performance, 300-2.

Table, Intelligence possessed by, 66, 72.
Table-turning, Description of the phenomena, 64; Prof. Faraday's theory of, 67; scientific attitude toward, 71; by fraudulent means, 73-4.
Telegraph, Electric, as a means of spirit communication, 82-3.
Telekinesis, Methods of fraudulently imitating the phenomena, 358; probable reality of, 359; nature of, 367-71; related to levitation, 386.
Telepathy, Unknown nature of, 291; impossibility of controlling, 291.
Telescopic rod, 196-7; uses of, 197.
Theosophy, 16-18.
Theosophical Society, Relations of, to S. P. R., 15-18.
Thought photography, 210.
Thread tie, as a convincing test, 184-5.
Trance mediums, Majority of, fraudulent, 411.
Trap-doors, 260-1, 272-3.
Trumpet mediums, Methods of obtaining voices by fraud, 201.

Unconscious muscular action, 67, 68.
Utility of psychical research, Question of, 325.

Vest-turning trick, 203-4.
Voices, Independent (*see* Trumpet mediums).

Wallace, Dr. A. R., On spirit-photography, 208; on the relative importance of mental and physical phenomena, 334.
Water, Cases of agitation of, 364-5.
Willmann, Carl, On the Slade phenomena, 25.
Wijk, H., On raps, 345-6.
Wire cage test, 184.

X. Miss, On abnormality, 329.

Zöllner, Prof., Tendencies to hallucination in, 28 (*see* Slade).

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